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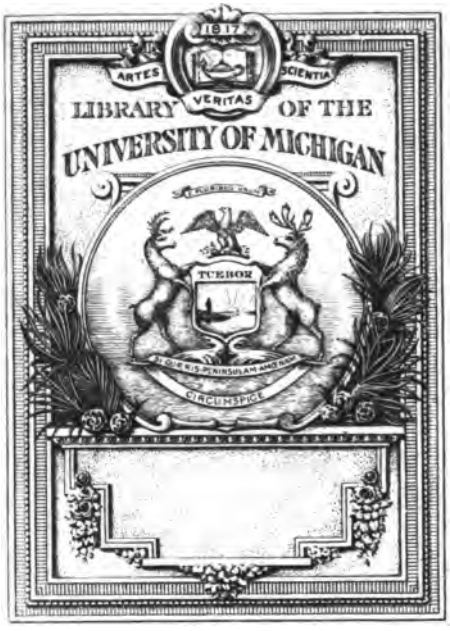

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THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

LATE

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH;

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, STUDIES,

AND

WRITINGS,

BY WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

ONE OF HIS LORDSHIP'S CHAPLAINS,

AND LONG HIS MOST INTIMATE AND CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND.

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A

COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

IN WHICH

THEIR LITERAL OR HISTORICAL SENSE, AS THEY RELATE TO KING DAVID AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, IS ILLUSTRATED;

AND THEIR APPLICATION TO MESSIAH, TO THE CHURCH, AND TO INDIVIDUALS AS MEMBERS THEREOF, IS POINTED OUT;

WITH A VIEW TO RENDER THE USE OF THE PSALTER PLEASING AND PROFITABLE TO ALL ORDERS AND DEGREES OF CHRISTIANS.

BY

GEORGE, LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH,

AND PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Psalms concerning me. *Luke*, xxiv. 44.
I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 15.
They sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. *Rev.* xv. 3.

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A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS.

FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXV.

ARGUMENT.

The Prophet, 1. gives thanks, with the church, to God for the manifestation of his NAME, and the wonders of salvation wrought thereby. 2. He declares his resolution of executing judgement and justice in his kingdom, which, 3. had been in disorder and confusion; 4, 5. he rebukes the wicked; 6—8. reminds them of the power, providence, counsels, and judgements of God; 9, 10. he concludes with repeating his resolution to praise God, to break the power of wickedness, and to establish righteousness.

VER. 1. *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks,* unto thee *do we give thanks: for* that *thy name* is *near, thy wondrous works declare.*

The church offers up her repeated praises to God for deliverance; she acknowledges the presence of

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his NAME in the midst of her, which had been evidenced by the "wonderful works" wrought for her salvation. Upon whatever occasion these words were originally endited, the Christian church now celebrates in them that great deliverance which, by so many miracles of mercy and power, hath been accomplished for her through Messiah, who is in Scripture frequently styled, "the NAME of Jehovah." See Isa. xxx. 27.

2. *When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.*

The first verse was spoken by many persons; "unto thee, O God, do WE give thanks;" here the speaker is one, and that one is plainly a ruler, who promises, that when he shall have "received the congregation," or, as some render it, "when he shall have gotten an appointed, or fit time, or season," that is, when he shall be established in power and authority, at a fit time and place, he will "judge uprightly," and introduce a thorough reformation into a kingdom, which, as we shall find by the following verse, stood greatly in need of it. From these circumstances it should seem most probable, that David is speaking of his advancement to the throne of Israel, and the intended rectitude of his administration, when he should be settled thereon. What David did in Israel, was done in the church universal, by him who sat upon the throne of David, when he "received," for his inheritance, the great "congregation" of the Gentiles, and the earth was full of the "righteousness" of Jehovah.

3. *The earth,* or, *the land, and all the inhabitants*

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thereof, are, or, *were, dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.*

Civil distractions, and the continual irruptions of foreign enemies, had thrown the Israelitish affairs into confusion, and "dissolved" the frame of government; until, by the re-establishment of royal authority, countenance and support were again given to all the subordinate magistrates; who are, in their respective stations, the "pillars" of a community. Such was the universal corruption and dissolution of manners both among Jews and Gentiles, when Messias, entering upon his regal office, reformed the world, raised the glorious fabric of the church, and made his apostles and their successors the "pillars" of his spiritual kingdom. Let men support religion, and God will support them.

4. *I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:* 5. *Lift not up your horn on high; speak not* with *a stiff neck.*

"Where the word of a king is, there is power." The Prophet addresses himself to the opposers of his government, and the disturbers of Israel: he urges the "folly" of exalting themselves against their prince; and exhorts them, for their own sakes, to humility and obedience. Is not this the very message which the ministers of Christ have received from their King, and are commanded to deliver to the world?

6. *For promotion* cometh *neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south;* 7. *But God* is *the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.*

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The opposition, mentioned in the preceding verse, was called "folly." In these verses it is proved to be such; as being an opposition, in effect, to the counsels of heaven; for, not by worldly power or craft, but by the designation and providence of God himself, the supreme judge of princes, and disposer of kingdoms, was the house of Saul "put down," and the house of David "set up." And are not, then, the enemies of the Son of God in arms against the Father; who, according to the promises going before concerning him, hath highly exalted him; hath committed all power and judgement to him; and hath put all things under his feet? Yea, and the hour is coming, when he shall put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and the Lord Jesus alone shall be exalted in that day. What will then be the portion of his impenitent adversaries, the next verse will inform us.

8. *For in the hand of the* LORD there is *a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring* them *out*, and *drink* them.

As the choicest of heavenly blessings are frequently in Scripture represented by the salutary effects of wine, a cup of which the master of the family is supposed to hold in his hand, ready to distribute due portions of it to those around him; so from the noxious and intoxicating qualities of that liquor, when drunk strong, and in too large a quantity, is borrowed a most tremendous image of the wrath and indignation of Almighty God. Calamity and sorrow,

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fear and trembling, infatuation and despair, the evils of the present life, and of that which is to come, are the bitter ingredients which compose this most horrible cup of mixture. It is entirely in the hand and disposal of God, who, through every age, has been pouring out, and administering of its contents, more or less, in proportion to the sins of men. But much of the strength and power of the liquor still remains behind, until the day of final vengeance. It will be then exhausted, even to the dregs, by unrepenting rebels; when "burning coals, fire, and brimstone," and eternal "tempest," shall be "the portion of "their cup." Ps. xi. 6.

9. *But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.*

These dispensations of mercy and judgement the Prophet resolves to "declare" to the world for ever, by thus "singing" the works and the "praises" of God, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And while we now sing them, we declare our resolution to be the same with his.

10. *All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;* but *the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.*

He determines likewise, as every good governor should do, to exert the authority with which he was intrusted; to break the power of triumphant wickedness, and to exalt that righteousness which exalteth a nation; hereby rendering himself a fit image of Him, who hath since done away transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness, who will one day turn the wicked into hell, and exalt his faithful servants to reign with him in heaven. Already he

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reigns in them upon earth; causing "all carnal affections to die in them, and all things belonging to "the Spirit to live and grow in them."

PSALM LXXVI.

ARGUMENT.

It is obvious, at first sight, to any one who reads this Psalm, that it was composed, as a thanksgiving hymn, on account of some great deliverance, wrought for his people, by the immediate hand of God. The miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army by the angel, in the days of king Hezekiah, is generally pitched upon, as the subject of it, and affirmed to be so by the ancient Greek inscription prefixed to it in the LXX version. The Prophet, 1, 2. declares the glory which God hath gotten him in Israel; 3—6. describes the circumstances of the deliverance, with, 7. a reflection thereupon; 8—10. he mentions the effects it had produced among the nations, and, 11, 12. those which it ought to produce in Israelitish hearts. The ideas are to be transferred to the salvation of the church universal, by the destruction of sin and Satan, and the overthrow of the persecuting powers.

1. *In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel.* 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion.*

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On occasion of some great deliverance, the Prophet speaks in transport concerning that presence and protection of God, which the highly favoured Judah once enjoyed. She enjoyed them while she continued faithful, and really was what she professed to be. But, on account of her infidelity, and rejection of her Messiah, an alteration of circumstances has taken place. They are no longer Jews, who are such outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but they are Jews, who believe in the Son of God; and they are of the circumcision, who are cleansed by him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The Gentile Christian church hath succeeded to the privileges of the Israelitish. In her now "God is known" by the Gospel; and "his Name is great" in her, by reason of all the mighty wonders which he hath wrought for her: she is the true "Salem," or city of peace; she is the true "Sion," the spiritual, holy, and beloved hill; and in her is the "tabernacle" and "dwelling place" of God her Saviour, by the Spirit.

3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.*

When God appeared in the defence of his ancient people, the weapons of their enemies were at once blunted and broken, and all the formidable apparatus of war became, in a moment, utterly useless. Such was the event, when the holy Jesus entered the lists against our spiritual adversaries, "for" us; and such ever will be the event, when he engages them "in" us.

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4. Thou art *more glorious* and *excellent than the mountains of prey.*

This may be a beautiful apostrophe to mount Sion (mentioned ver. 2), as appearing infinitely more glorious and excellent, through the favour and protection of her God, than the arm of flesh and the instruments of war could render the kingdoms of the earth, which set themselves against her; and which, for their tyranny, and cruelty, and the ravages committed by them, are likened to those mountains, where beasts of prey, with similar dispositions, rove, and roar, and devour. The powers of the world "make war with the Lamb, whose station is upon "mount Sion;" but "the Lamb shall overcome "them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; "and they that are with him are called, and chosen, "and faithful." Rev. xiv. 1. xvii. 14.

5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot, or, *rider, and horse, are cast into a dead sleep.*

It must be acknowledged, that these two verses seem in a very particular manner to point at the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, when the "stout-"hearted," who doubted not of taking and spoiling the holy city, were themselves suddenly "spoiled" of strength and life; they "slept their sleep, and "found not their hands;" they awaked not again to the use of their powers and faculties; a rebuking blast was sent from the God of Jacob, under which

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the flower of Assyria withered in the space of a night, and in the morning was no more;" the horse and "his rider were cast into a dead sleep;" they slept the sleep of death. How, in a moment, "were the "mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" How astonishing the downfal of the tyrant! How complete the triumph of the daughter of Sion! Such will be the destruction of the world; such the salvation of the people of God.

7. *Thou,* even *thou,* art *to be feared; and, who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?*

Why are the miraculous exertions of omnipotence recorded in the book of life, but to suggest to us this reflection, that God, and God only, is the proper object of our fear; since neither the wisdom of the wise, nor the power of the mighty, no, not the world itself, can stand a single moment before him, "when "once he is angry?" Yet we continue to dread any frowns but those of Heaven; and one poor, vain, sinful man shall, through a course of sixty or seventy years, incessantly and undauntedly tempt and provoke Him who destroyed 185,000 in a night. What is this, but madness?

8. *Thou didst cause judgement to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still;* 9. *When God arose to judgement, to save all the meek of the earth,* or, *the afflicted of the land.*

A destruction so far exceeding human power, was evidently the sentence of God's judgement, audibly pronounced from the eternal throne; and it was heard by all the earth with an awful silence, as when he speaks to attentive nature in thunder. Such was

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the effect which this interposition in behalf of his people produced among the surviving Assyrians, and the neighbouring nations. Let us carry our thoughts on to the sensations which will be felt in the hearts of men, at that hour when the last trump shall sound in the heavens, and the earth shall shake from her foundations; when God shall arise to execute judgement on the adversaries of his church; and to save, with an everlasting salvation, all the meek and afflicted of the earth.

10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

The wrath of man, and of Satan himself, against the church, turns, in the end, to the praise and glory of God, who represses it when at its height; and at all times appoints those bounds which it cannot pass, any more than the raging waves of the ocean can overflow their appointed barrier of sand.

11. *Vow and pay unto the* LORD *your God; let all that are round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.* 12. *He shall cut off,* or, *restrain, the spirit of princes;* he is *terrible to the kings of the earth.*

If such should have been the gratitude and devotion of Israelites, for a temporary deliverance from the fury of an earthly tyrant: how much higher ought that of Christians to rise, for eternal redemption from the great oppressor! How ought they to "vow and pay their vows unto the LORD their "God; to bring presents," to offer all they have, and all they are, to him who is so greatly "to be "feared," so highly to be loved; to him who "re-

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"strains" the fury of evil angels, as well as "the "spirit of princes;" and is "terrible" to the powers of darkness, no less than to "the kings of "the earth!"

PSALM LXXVII.

ARGUMENT.

As the foregoing Psalm was evidently composed when the church had obtained deliverance from her enemies, this seems no less plainly to have been written at a time when she was in captivity under them. It contains, 1—4. a complaint of sufferings; and, 5—20. a description at large of the struggle between distrust and faith; which latter prevails, by having recourse to the consideration of ancient mercies; particularly, that of redemption from Egypt. The Psalm is admirably calculated for the use and consolation of any church, or soul, when in affliction and distress.

1. *I cried unto God with my voice,* even *unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.*

Uneasiness in the heart will utter itself by the "voice;" and when the pain is intense, the "cry" will be loud. Only let it take a right direction, and ascend to heaven; let the application be made to "God," who will both "hear" and help; not to the world, which will not do one, and cannot do the

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other. The cries of the Son of God alone were heard] for his own sake; the cries of all other men are heard for his sake.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not;* Heb. *my hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not,* or, *without intermission; my soul refused to be comforted.*

To a soul deeply sensible of the world's vanity, and the misery of sin, every day is a "day of "trouble," and the whole time of her pilgrimage is a long, dark, and wearisome "night," during which she seeks after her beloved by prayer; and, for the sake of him, and those future joys which she expects in his presence, the pleasures of sense are put away from her, and she "refuses to be comforted" by such comforters. An Israelite cannot enjoy himself in Babylon; a Christian cannot find perfect satisfaction in the world: a return to Jerusalem will employ the thoughts of both.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;* or, *I remembered God, and made a noise,* i. e. in prayer to him; *I meditated, and my spirit was obscured,* or, *darkened,* through grief and affliction.

This is a fine description of what passes in an afflicted and dejected mind. Between the remembrance of God and his former mercies, and the meditation on a seeming desertion under present calamities, the affections are variously agitated, and the prayers disturbed, like the tumultuous waves of a troubled

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sea; while the fair light from above is intercepted, and the face of heaven overwhelmed with clouds and darkness.

4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

Through grief and anxiety it is, that the eyes are made to keep all the watches of the night, and wait in vain for sleep to relieve them from duty, until the dawning of the morning. To a night so spent, may a season of captivity or persecution be compared. Thus the ancient church looked for the first advent of Christ; and thus doth the church which now is expect his second; prolonging her vigils, even unto the dawning of that morning, which is at once to put a period to darkness and to sorrow. In the mean time, she giveth herself to meditation and prayer.

5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit maketh diligent search.

Recollection of former mercies is the proper antidote against a temptation to despair, in the day of calamity. And as in the divine dispensations, which are always uniform and like themselves, whatever has happened happens again, when the circumstances are similar; the experience of "ancient times" is to be called in to our aid, and duly consulted. Nay, we may perhaps "remember" the time, when we ourselves were led to compose and utter a "song" of joy and triumph, on occasion of signal mercies

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vouchsafed us. Upon these topics we should, "in "the night of affliction, commune with our own "hearts, and make diligent search," as Daniel did in Babylon, into the cause, the nature, and the probable continuance of our troubles; with the proper methods of shortening, and bringing them to an end, by suffering them to have their intended and full effect, in a sincere repentance, and thorough reformation.

7. *Will the* LORD *cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?* 8. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth* his *promise fail for evermore?* 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*

The Psalmist now relates the process of his meditations, and of that controversy which arose in his heart between faith and distrust. While he viewed the distressful scene around him, he found himself strongly tempted to question God's love of the church; to think that he had finally rejected his people; that the promised mercy of redemption would never be accomplished; and that indignation had constrained the bowels of our heavenly Father, which no longer yearned towards his afflicted children. These were the thoughts suggested to a desponding soul by the desolations of Sion at that time; and the state of things in the world may possibly be such, as to suggest the like thoughts to many in the Christian church, before our Lord shall appear again, for her final redemption. Imaginations of the same cast will offer themselves to the mind of the sinner, when

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the hand of God has lain long and heavy upon him, by the infliction of outward calamities, or the terrors of conscience.

10. *And I said, This* is *my infirmity:* but I will remember *the years,* or, *changes, of the right hand of the Most High.*

To the insinuations of distrust, faith now begins to reply. The sufferer checks himself in his former train of thought, and humbly acknowledges it to have sprung from a mind dispirited, and rendered timid, by misfortunes: "I said, This is my infirmity;" but he immediately strengthens himself by reflecting, that all "changes" in the conditions of men are effected, for reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, by "the right hand of the Most High;" which is not shortened, but can still, as formerly, when he sees fit, deliver and exalt, as well as punish and depress, his people. What, therefore, though the daughter of Sion be in captivity, and her enemies insult over her? Messias cometh, who shall redeem her, and all nations; and then shall "the right hand of the Most "High" work an universal and a glorious "change" upon the earth.

11. *I will remember the works of the* LORD: *surely I will remember thy wonders of old.* 12. *I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.*

Thus restored to a right frame of mind, the Psalmist, instead of brooding any longer over the calamities of his own time, resolves to turn his thoughts towards the divine dispensations of old; to meditate on God's former works and wonders; his

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works of justice and mercy, of power and wisdom, of nature and grace; and, by gratefully celebrating them, to invigorate his faith in the salvation to come, of which they were so many earnests and pledges. And it is this consideration, which makes the eucharistic Psalms ever pleasing, and ever comfortable to the mind; they are appeals to those attributes which have been so often displayed in the cause of the church; they are acts of faith, looking backward to the past, and forward to the future; they are praises, and they are prayers.

13. *Thy way, O God,* is *in the sanctuary,* or, *in holiness: who* is so *great a god as* our *God?*

Faith, now reinstated in its sovereignty over the prejudices and fears of the soul, and again placed upon the judgement-seat, pronounces the "ways" or proceedings of God to be such, as, when weighed in the balance of the "sanctuary," and judged of by the divine rule and manner of acting, will be found agreeable to the standard of perfect "holiness." An assurance is likewise expressed, that the power of God, however it may, for a time, lie dormant, yet still retains the same superiority, of which former exertions show it to have been possessed, over the gods of the nations, the elements of nature, and the powers of the world; insomuch that nothing, which was ever called by others, or called itself, "god," was able to stand before Jehovah, the God of Israel: "Who is so great a god as our God?" Thus, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in "earth," saith our blessed Lord, Matt. xxviii. 18. for the everlasting consolation of the Christian church.

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14. *Thou* art *the God that doest wonders; thou hast declared thy strength among the people.* 15. *Thou hast with* thine *arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.*

Israel, in times of trouble and distress, was wont to look back to the "wonders" wrought in Egypt, and the redemption of all her tribes from that house of bondage. We Christians are taught, while we use the same words, to regard parallel, but more important, transactions; we reflect on the "wonders" wrought for the bodies and souls of men, by the "strength and the arm" of Jehovah, revealed and manifested to the world in Christ; and we celebrate the redemption, not of "the sons of Jacob and Jo-"seph" only, but of all nations, from the bondage of corruption; a redemption compared with which, the deliverance from Egypt, though glorious in itself, hath yet no glory at all, by reason of the glory that so far excelleth. Our confidence in God, during the seasons of affliction, should therefore rise in proportion.

16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.*

The waters of the Red Sea are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility, as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over; until his people were passed over whom he had redeemed. In this amazing transaction, let

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us behold, as in a glass, the salvation of believers by baptism, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who made the depths of the grave, as he had done those of the sea, a way for his ransomed to pass over; and the church, like another Israel, saw her enemies, in effect, dead at her feet.

17. *The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad.* 18. *The voice of thy thunder* was *in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

It is said, Exod. xiv. 24. that at the time when Israel was passing the sea, "the Lord looked upon "the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire "and the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyp- "tians, and took off their chariot-wheels, and made "them to go heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let "us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fight- "eth for them against the Egyptians." The verses of our Psalm now before us, seem to explain more particularly the manner in which the Lord "look- "ed upon, and troubled, and fought against, the "Egyptians," upon that occasion; namely, by thunders and lightnings, storms and tempests, rain, hail, and earthquake, the usual tokens and instruments of Almighty displeasure. Josephus, in like manner, relates, that the destruction of the Egyptians was accompanied by storms of rain from heaven; by dreadful thunders and lightnings; and, in short, by every possible circumstance of terror, which could testify and inflict upon man the vengeance of an incensed God. From scenes like these, we learn to form

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an idea of that power which discomfited the infernal host; raised Christ from the dead; vanquished opposition and persecution; subdued the world to the obedience of faith; supports and protects the church; will overthrow antichrist; raise the dead; cast the wicked, with death and Satan, into the lake of fire; and exalt the righteous, to sing, with angels in heaven, "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." See Rev. xv. 3.

19. *Thy way* is *in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.*

The dispensations and ways of God, like the passage through the Red Sea, are all full of mercy to his people; but they are also, like that, often unusual, marvellous, inscrutable; and we can no more trace his footsteps, than we could have done those of Israel, after the waters had returned to their place again. Let us resolve, therefore, to trust in him at all times; and let us think we hear Moses saying to us, as he did to the Israelites, when seemingly reduced to the last extremity; "Fear ye not, stand still, and see "the salvation of Jehovah." Exod. xiv. 13.

20. *Thou leddest thy people, like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

The loving kindness of God towards Israel did not stop at the Red Sea, but he conducted his chosen flock, by the guidance of faithful pastors, through all the perils of the wilderness, to the land of promise. We likewise, through thy mercy, O blessed Lord Jesus, have passed the Red Sea at our baptism; and are now journeying in the wilderness. Give us those meek, and lowly, and tractable dispositions, which

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become the sheep of thy pasture; set over us skilful and vigilant shepherds; and be thou ever both with them and with us; until, having surmounted all difficulties and dangers, led by thy grace, and supported by thy providence, we all come, in perfect safety, to the land of everlasting rest; there to live with thee, one fold under one shepherd, world without end.

FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth a declaration of God's dealings with his people, and of their behaviour to him, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan, to the days of David. It is written for the use and admonition of Christians, who may here view, as in a glass, the mercies they have received, and the returns which, alas! they have but too often made for them.

1. *Give ear, O my people,* to *my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.*

In this verse, the Psalmist opens his commission, and speaks, as one having authority from above to instruct the world. He demands a large and attentive audience, while, by a series of examples, he sets forth the goodness of God, and the ingratitude of man, for the admonition of succeeding ages, to the

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end of time. St. Paul, speaking of the very transactions related in our Psalm, saith of them, "Now "all these things happened unto them for ensamples, "Gr. τυποι, types; and they are written for our ad- "monition, upon whom the ends of the world are "come:" 1 Cor. x. 11. We Christians, therefore, must consider ourselves as the "people" who are to "give ear to the law," or "doctrine," inculcated by the following epitome of the Israelitish history; we must "incline our ears to the words of" the Prophet's "mouth."

2. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

The Psalm, being in itself a plain narrative of facts, can contain nothing parabolical or enigmatical in it, unless those facts were, what St. Paul affirms them to have been, "ensamples," types, or representations of other facts relative to the Christian church. As facts, they were "heard and known," and handed down from father to son; but, with respect to the instructions and admonitions comprehended in them, and to be extracted by an application to parallel times and circumstances, they had the nature of a "parable," requiring wisdom and attention so to understand and apply them. It is observable, that our Lord is, by St. Matthew, said to have spoken to the multitude altogether in parables, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the "Prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in para- "bles," &c. citing the second verse of the Psalm now before us: Mat. xiii. 35. If it doth not fol-

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low from this citation, that the Prophet actually speaks the Psalm in the person of Christ, yet thus much at least is evident from it, that the history of old Israel somewhat resembles the letter of the Gospel parables, and contains, shadowed out under it, the history of a correspondent state of things in the new Israel, or church Christian *. And although the Psalm, like a large and capacious palace, be laid out into a multitude of different apartments; yet, perhaps, we may find, that the Scriptures of the New Testament will furnish us with a key, which will gain us admission into every one of them, and put us in possession of the treasures of divine wisdom therein deposited.

4. *We will not hide* them *from their children, showing to the generation to come,* Heb. *the latter generation, the praises of the* LORD, *and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.*

The writer of this Psalm is desirous that "the "praises of Jehovah, his strength, and the wonder-"ful works that he hath done," an account of which had reached his own time, should be transmitted through all the periods of the Jewish economy, down to the דור אחרון, the "latter generation," or generation to arise in the "latter days;" the generation of the faithful, to be begotten unto God, from among the Gentiles, through the Gospel. Of this generation are we, who now, in these words of the holy

* "In parabolis"—Aliud dicit; aliud innuit; ac præteritorum specie futura præsagit. Id quoque ex personâ Christi; Matt. xiii. 35. BOSSUET.

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Psalmist, do from age to age "show the praises of "the Lord" our Saviour, "and his strength and his "wondrous works that he hath done" for us, as he promised and foreshowed in his dispensations of old time. The glorious theme was delivered by the Israelitish to the Christian church, and will be resumed in heaven, there for ever to employ the tongues of saints, and the harps of angels.

5. *For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:* 6. *That the generation to come,* or, *latter generation, might know* them, even *the children* which *should be born;* who *should arise, and declare* them *to their children.*

The account of God's dealings with his people to be celebrated in our Psalm, begins with the "law," or "testimony, appointed and established in Israel," by the hand of Moses. Under these names are comprehended, not only the precepts and ceremonies, but the several transactions to which they referred, and in commemoration of which they were instituted; as also that future salvation, to which they, as well as the transactions, had an aspect. Thus the passover, for instance, looked backward to the redemption by Moses, and forward to that by Messiah. The law thus considered, as involving the Gospel within it, was, to understanding and pious Israelites, the fountain of wisdom and source of delight. They were to meditate therein day and night, and teach their children to do likewise; until, with its types

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realized, and its prophecies accomplished, in the Redeemer, it should go forth out of Sion in perfect beauty, and run and be glorified among the nations. The "law" and the "testimony" are now become ours; and it is our duty to transmit them down to latest posterity, until Jesus shall return to judgement.

7. *That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:* 8. *And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation* that *set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.*

The reason is here assigned, why God gave Israel a law, and commanded that fathers should teach it to their children, and their children's children; and the same reason holds with regard to the Gospel; namely, that the chosen people, renouncing the world, with its idols and lusts, should believe and "set their hope in" the true "God," the only Saviour; that they should "not forget the works" which he hath wrought for their redemption; and that, ever mindful of those works, they should love him, and "keep his commandments;" not following the examples of the fathers of Israel, who proved "faithless," and "rebellious" in the wilderness, when God had brought them out of Egypt. This is the very use St. Paul makes of those examples. "With "some of them," says he, "God was not well pleased, "for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now "these things were our examples," τυποι ἡμων, "to

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"the intent WE should not lust after evil things, or "be idolaters, or commit fornication, &c. &c. as did "some of them." 1 Cor. x. 5.

9. *The children of Ephraim,* being *armed,* and *carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.*

As the context treats concerning the behaviour of Israel in general, upon their coming out of Egypt; and as the cowardice of the tribe of Ephraim in particular, at that time, is no where mentioned, it is therefore most probable, that one tribe is here put for all the rest; and that, under the figure of men, when prepared for battle, turning their backs at sight of an enemy, is pointed out that disposition of the Israelites, after all their promises, resolutions, and vows of serving and obeying God, to fall away, and relapse into sin, upon the first temptation. How often is this the case with the Christian soldier! Let not him, who hath but just put on his spiritual armour, boast, like him who is putting it off, when the fight is over, and the victory obtained.

10. *They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;* 11. *And forgat his works, and his wonders, that he had showed them.* 12. *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt,* in *the field of Zoan.*

These verses, it is apprehended, describe in plain terms, what was metaphorically expressed in the verse preceding, namely, the proneness of the Israelites to break the "covenant," transgress the "law," and forget the "works" of God, even those astonishing works wrought in "Egypt," and in "Zoan," its capital city. Let the Christian, who perhaps is amazed at the frequent rebellions of stiff-necked

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Israel, reflect a little within himself, how he has observed the baptismal "covenant," how he has "walked in the law," and with what gratitude he has remembered the "marvellous works" of Jesus.

13. *He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.*

From the miracles wrought in Egypt, the Psalmist proceeds to what happened at the Exodus. And here he fails not to mention that great work of Almighty power, the division of the Red Sea, which was ever uppermost in the thoughts of a devout Israelite; as the passage of the church, in Christ her Saviour, through the grave and gate of death, ought never to depart from the memory of a Christian.

14. *In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.*

During the forty years' pilgrimage of Israel in the wilderness, a preternatural column of fire and cloud attended the camp. It rested with them, and moved on before them, directing and conducting them in their journeys; in the night-season it was a bright and shining light; and in the day-time it afforded a grateful cooling shade from the burning heat of those sultry deserts. Thus is Christ present with his church, while she sojourns upon earth, by his Word and his Spirit, guiding her steps, enlightening her darkness, and mitigating her sorrows.

15. *He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave* them *drink as* out of *the great depths.* 16. *He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

"Let us," saith bishop Taylor, "by the aids of memory and fancy, consider the children of Israel in

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the wilderness, in a barren and dry land where no water was, marching in dust and fire, not wet with the dew of heaven, but wholly without moisture, save only what dropped from their own brows. The air was fire, and the vermin was fire; the flying serpents were of the same kindred with the firmament; their sting was a flame, their venom was a fever, and the fever a calenture; and the whole state of the Israelites' abode and travel was a little image of the day of judgement, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat. These men, like salamanders walking in fire, dry with heat, scorched with thirst, and made yet more thirsty by calling upon God for water; suppose, I say, these thirsty souls, hearing Moses promise that he will smite the rock, and that a river should break forth from thence; observe how presently they run to the foot of the springing stone, thrusting forth their heads and tongues to meet the water, impatient of delay, crying out that the water did not move, like light, all at once: and then suppose the pleasure of their drink, the insatiableness of their desire, the immensity of their appetite: they took in as much as they could, and they desired much more. This was their Sacrament, and this was their manner of receiving it. And if that water was a type of our Sacrament, or a Sacrament of the same secret blessing, then is their thirst a signification of our duty *."

17. *And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.* 18. *And*

* Worthy Communicant, p. 92.

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they tempted God in their hearts, by asking meat for their lust. 19. *Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* 20. *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also, or provide flesh, for his people?*

These frequent rebellions of Israel, with the presence of God in the midst of them, and his miracles before their eyes, would seem incredible, had they been related any where but in the oracles of truth; and did not the heart of every self-knowing Christian at once acknowledge the picture which is here drawn of human nature, its incredulity and perverseness. For hath not God delivered us from the house of bondage, and supported us in the wilderness? is not Jesus present in the church, and are not his miracles of love and mercy continually before our eyes, in the Word and in the Sacrament? Yet, who does not still "provoke" and "tempt the Most High?" who does not ask provision for his "lust," when his necessities are satisfied? and who, after all the proofs he has had of God's power and goodness, is not apt, upon every appearance of danger, to be diffident and distrustful of his providence? Before we condemn others, let us try ourselves, and judge righteous judgement. When David pronounced the words, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely "die," little did he think of being told, by his faithful monitor, "Thou art the man." Conscience, if duly interrogated, will be a Nathan to every one, and show him his own transgressions, in those of old Israel.

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21. *Therefore the* LORD *heard* this, *and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven, 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.*

The discontents mentioned above, in verse 17, &c. were posterior not only to the miracle at the rock, but also to the gift of "manna," which, after some little time, the people "loathed," and demanded "flesh," repenting that they had forsaken Egypt, where they fared more to their satisfaction: see Numb. xi. The cause of the discontents was infidelity, and the effect of them a display of God's indignation: "The Lord was wroth—because they be-"lieved not," &c. Now, as St. Paul styles the water "spiritual," or, sacramental "drink," proceeding from "a spiritual rock, which rock was Christ;" so he terms the manna, "spiritual," or, sacramental "meat: They did all eat of that same spiritual meat:" I Cor. x. 3. And our Lord, in John vi. discourses at large upon the subject, to convince the Jews, that God, who gave to their fathers manna in the wilderness, had in HIM given them "the true bread" of eternal life, which the manna was intended to represent. "I am the living bread which came down "from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall "live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my "flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

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Christ crucified is the support of spiritual and eternal life; faith is the mouth by which this support is received; manna was an outward and visible sign of it to the Israelites in the wilderness; the eucharistic bread is such to Christians in the world. When that holy ordinance is celebrated, "the doors of heaven "are opened," spiritual food is given from above, "and man eats לחם אבירים, the bread of the "mighty ones;" whether by "mighty ones" we understand those who eat the bread, and are invigorated thereby, or the blessed persons who give the bread to man. Such is our manna, our sustenance in the wilderness, our viaticum, while on the road to Canaan. But how is it "loathed," and despised, in comparison with "the flesh-pots of Egypt," by men who "be-"lieve not in God, and trust not in his salvation!" Will not the same cause produce the same effect? Will not "Jehovah hear this, and be wroth?" Will not "a fire be kindled against Jacob, and anger also "come up against Israel?" "For this cause," saith an apostle to the irreverent Corinthian receivers, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many "sleep." 1 Cor. xi. 30.

26. *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.* 27. *He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea.* 28. *And he let* it *fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.* 29. *So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire:* 30. *They were not estranged from their lust. But while the meat* was *yet in their mouths,* 31. *The wrath of God*

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came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men *of Israel.*

The people, discontented with manna, asked, in a tumultuous and rebellious way, for flesh, at the same time distrusting the power of God to give it them in the wilderness. Flesh, however, was procured. A wind, proper for the occasion, went forth from Jehovah, and brought a cloud of quails, which furnished the whole camp with a most delicious kind of flesh food, for the space of an entire month. But from the event we learn, that inordinate desires, though sometimes complied with, and satisfied by heaven, do not therefore go unpunished; on the contrary, they are often punished by being complied with. The blessings, chosen for us by God, are blessings indeed, and, like the manna, bring no sorrow with them: but when we choose for ourselves, and are so unhappy as to be gratified in that choice, our portion too often proves a curse; and, while the much-loved morsel is yet between our teeth, "the "wrath of God comes upon us," for making a wrong choice. This will always be the case in the end, whenever earth is preferred to heaven, and sense to faith.

32. *For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.* 33. *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.*

Mercies are followed by provocations; provocations are punished with judgements; to judgements succeed repeated provocations, which call down fresh judgements. Immediately after the history of the quails, we read of a sedition stirred up by Aaron and

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Miriam, and of new murmurs at the report, brought by the spies, concerning the promised land; in consequence of which last, the nation had been destroyed, but for the intercession of Moses; and the whole generation of those who came out of Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb, actually fell in the wilderness, wasted and consumed by various plagues and calamities, during a forty years' peregrination: see Numb. xii. xiii. xiv. St. Jude makes mention of such a generation in the early days of the Christian church, speakers of "hard speeches against Christ, murmur-"ers, complainers, walking after their own lusts;" and he therefore puts converts "in remembrance, "how that the Lord, having saved the people out of "the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that "believed not:" Jude, verse 5. and 15. Because, notwithstanding all that Jesus has done, and continues to do for the church, men "sin yet more, and "believe not for his wondrous works," but either despise the heavenly country, or despair of obtaining it, therefore is the hand of God heavy upon the world; "vanity and trouble" wear out the life of man; and they who have passed the waters of baptism, fall short of the promised rest.

34. *When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and inquired early after God.* 35. *And they remembered that God* was *their rock, and the high God their redeemer.* 36. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.* 37. *For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.*

Several instances of this behaviour occur in the

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history of Korah's rebellion and punishment, of the fiery serpents, and of Israel and Moab: see Numb. xvi. xx. xxi. xxv. The Israelites, in this particular, resembled their great persecutor Pharaoh; their repentance, which came with the divine judgements, went also away with them, and appeared no more. By night the dew falleth from heaven, and refresheth the weary ground, and causeth the green herb and the flower of the field to revive and spring; but in the morning the sun ariseth with a burning heat, and presently the dew is evaporated, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, and the ground again becometh parched and dry, as before. Thus it is with man. Adversity is the night, and grace is the dew, by which his heart is made tender and religious, and good resolutions are formed, and begin to shoot; but returning prosperity has the force and effect of a summer sun: at its presence piety vanisheth, resolutions come to nothing, and the heart is once more hardened. "O Ephraim," exclaims Jehovah by his prophet, "what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what "shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a "morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth "away:" Hos. vi. 4. Who, that hath been conversant in the house of mourning, and about the bed of sickness, but must have seen frequent instances of a temporary and deceitful repentance? Whose heart doth not reproach him with some of these backslidings of Israel? In the day, therefore, of health, and strength, and prosperity, before the indignation of Heaven break forth, and the right-aiming thunderbolts fly abroad, from a motive of love, not of fear,

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let us "seek early after God, and return from our "sins, remembering the rock of our salvation, and "the high God, our Redeemer." Thus may we entertain some hope, that our conversion is sincere; that we do not "flatter and lie" unto our Maker; that our "heart is right with him," and we shall continue "steadfast in his covenant." And then, a plant that is set and lives in the heat of the day, how will it thrive and flourish under the cool and moist influences of night!

38. *But he* being *full of compassion, forgave* their *iniquity, and destroyed* them *not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.* 39. *For he remembered that they* were but *flesh; a wind*, or *breath, that passeth away, and cometh not again.*

Had God "stirred up all his wrath," the Israelites must have been exterminated in the wilderness. But then the promises made to Abraham, of mercy and "compassion" to them, and by them to all mankind, had failed. Therefore they were "forgiven," and not "destroyed:" judgement was executed, from time to time, upon the person of offenders; but still a remnant was left; the nation subsisted, until the Seed came to whom the promise was made. Nay, although, in consequence of their last and greatest crime, their polity was subverted with their city and temple, the race is yet marvellously preserved; and, we trust, preserved for mercy to be shown them in the last days. Be not angry, O Lord Jesu, for ever with them, or with us; but remember of what materials we are made, and into what a state we are

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fallen; how weak and how frail we are; how liable to be seduced into sin, and blinded by error: remember this, O Lord, and forgive us; and teach us to remember it, that we may forgive one another.

40. *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert?* 41. *Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* 42. *They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the hand of the enemy:* 43. *How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan.*

The question which the Psalmist here asks, concerning Israel in the wilderness, is elsewhere asked by him concerning mankind in general: "Who can "tell how oft he offendeth?" Ps. xix. 12. God informs Moses, who had interceded for the people, and, in the name of the great Mediator, obtained their pardon, that "those men which had seen his "glory, and his miracles which he did in Egypt and "in the wilderness, had tempted him ten times, and "had not hearkened to his voice:" Numb. xiv. 22. Forgetfulness of the mercies of redemption is the beginning of sin; and though every one knows how to resent and detest the crime of ingratitude in another, he yet thinks that his best benefactor will overlook the most flagrant instances of it in himself.

44. *And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.* 45. *He sent divers sorts of flies,* Heb. *a mixture,* whether of beasts, or insects, noisome and destructive, *among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.* 46. *He gave also their increase*

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unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore-trees with frost. 48. *He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts,* or, *flashes of lightning.*

The Psalm goes back to the subject of Israelitish ingratitude, mentioned at the beginning, verse 11, 12, in order to introduce an account of the miracles wrought in Egypt previous to the exodus. These miracles were intended to evince the superiority of Jehovah over the elements and powers of nature, which at that time were objects of worship amongst the Egyptians, but plainly appeared to act at the command of Moses, in subordination to their great Creator, the God of the Hebrews. In the heavens, on the earth, and in the waters, supremacy and independency were demonstrated to belong to him only; fire and air, thunder and lightning, wind, rain, and hail, obeyed his word: rivers became blood, and their inhabitants perished; insects and animals left their wonted habitations, to destroy vegetables, or torment man: so that wherever the gods of Egypt were supposed to reside, and to exert their influences in favour of their votaries, in all places, and all circumstances, victory declared for Jehovah. Hence modern as well as ancient idolaters may learn not to put their trust in the world, but in him who made, and who can and will destroy, it; whose power can render the most insignificant of his creatures instruments of his vengeance, and, in a moment, arm all the elements against sinners; and whose mercy will employ that power in the final salvation of the church; when, as

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the author of the book of Wisdom expresseth it, "He shall make the creature his weapon for the re- "venge of his enemies, and the world shall fight for "him against the unwise:" Wisdom v. 17. 20. The curious and striking reflections which that author makes on the plagues of Egypt, in chap. xi. xvii. xviii. xix. are well worthy an attentive perusal. It is also to be observed, that St. John describes the judgements of the last days in terms plainly alluding to those poured out upon the Egyptians, "as locusts "and frogs, blood and darkness," &c. See Rev. ix. and xvi. et al. Under these images are represented, false teachers and erroneous doctrines, carnality and ignorance, and, in a word, whatever contributes to ravage the moral or spiritual world, to deface the beauty of holiness, and destroy the fruits of faith. And of all the divine judgements, these are by far the most dreadful, though generally the least dreaded.

49. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels* among them.

Some of the Egyptian plagues having been specified in the foregoing verses, others of them are here thrown together, and the whole scene is affirmed to have been a full display of wrath and vengeance, executed upon the oppressors of the church by רעים מלאכים, "evil angels, agents, or messengers:" whether by this expression we understand the material instruments of divine displeasure; or angels employed as ministers of vengeance; or the actual appearance and ministration of evil spirits, suffered to torment the wicked in this world, as they certainly

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redemption by "the blood of the Lamb," passed 300 years in a state of minority, as it were, and under persecution, which, with allusion to what befel Israel of old, is called in the Revelation, her flight and abode in the WILDERNESS: Rev. xii. 6. At length the true "Joshua," or "Jesus, "brought" her "into the possession of the Gentiles;" see Acts vii. 45. and she enjoyed a temporary rest and prosperity. But no terrestrial Canaan, no secular advantages, should make us forget, as the Jews did, and as Christians are apt to do, that the church is in the wilderness, while she is in the world; and that "there "remaineth yet" another and far more glorious "rest for the people of God," after which they ought ever to be aspiring. See Heb. iv. 9.

56. *Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:* 57. *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.* 58. *For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.*

The Israelites, when settled in the promised land, soon showed themselves to be the genuine descendants of those men who tempted God in the desert. We can hardly read two chapters in the book of Judges, but we meet with the words, "And the children of "Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord." For this their frequent revolting they are compared to "a deceitful bow," which, when put to the trial, is sure to disappoint the archer, either dropping the arrow at his feet, or carrying it wide of the mark. Their zeal and love were either wholly relaxed and

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enervated by sensuality and indolence, or else turned aside, and misplaced on false objects of worship. Thus, in the present decline of religion, the devotion of the Romanists hath attached itself to saints, angels, and images; while that of Protestants sleepeth, and must be awakened. In what manner, is known to God only.

59. *When God heard* this, *he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:* 60. *So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent* which *he placed among men;* 61. *And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.*

Rebellion against God, will, sooner or later, draw down his vengeance, and cause the most beloved nation to be "abhorred" by him: he will forsake the place of his residence, "the tent placed among men," where he dwelleth by his Spirit; and the church, by which his "strength" and his "glory" are manifested to the world, shall go "into captivity, "and the enemy's hand." All this we are taught by that which came to pass in Israel, when, for the sins of priests and people, the ark of God, which then abode in Shiloh, was suffered to fall into the hands of the Philistines: 1 Sam. iv. The present state of Jerusalem, and of all the once-flourishing Eastern and African churches, speaks aloud the same awful and concerning truth. "He that hath "ears to hear, let him hear."

62. *He gave his people over also to the sword: and was wroth with his inheritance.* 63. *The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were*

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not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

These verses refer to the slaughter of Israel by the Philistines, which was an effect of divine wrath, compared here, as elsewhere, to "a consuming fire;" they refer likewise to the death of old Eli, of Hophni and Phinehas, and the widow of Phinehas, who expired in childbed, on hearing the mournful news: 1 Sam. iv. History abounds with the tragical stories of wars and captivities: Scripture informs us, they are the judgements of God against sin. But calamities affect us not, till they become our own: it is well if they reform us, even when they do become so.

65. *Then the* LORD *awaked, as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man, that shouteth, by reason of wine.*

While, by God's permission, the Philistines were chastising his people for their sins, he held his peace, and seemed unconcerned, as one asleep. But when due chastisement has brought the delinquents to themselves, the cries of penitent Israel awakened, as it were, and called forth the zeal of the Lord of hosts, to vindicate his honour, and deliver his servants: and then the vigour of his operations was such, as might be compared to the alacrity and courage of a mighty champion, when, refreshed and inspirited by wine, he attacks his adversaries, and bears down all before him. Under all our sufferings, let us rest contented with this assurance, that God acts the part of a father; and will therefore remove the rod, when it has answered the end proposed.

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66. *And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.*

The former clause of this verse may be rendered, "And he repulsed, or, drove, his enemies back;" as Psalm ix. 3. "When mine enemies are turned "back;" the word אחור being the same, in both places. But as that part of the sacred history is here alluded to, in which the Philistines are said to have been plagued with "emerods," or hemorrhoids, while the ark was amongst them, the passage is generally rendered, as in our translation, and supposed to intend that particular plague. Thus much, however, is certain, that Dagon fell before the ark, which his worshippers were glad to send back, with acknowledgements of the vengeance inflicted on them by the superior power of the God of Israel, who could punish where, and when, and how, he pleased. See 1 Sam. v. vi.

67. *Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:* 68. *But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Sion which he loved.* 69. *And he built his sanctuary like high* palaces, *like the earth which he hath established for ever.*

The ark, after its return, went no more to Shiloh, which was in the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, but was brought first to Kiriathaim, 1 Sam. vi. 21. a city of the tribe of Judah, and from thence, after a short stay at the house of Obed Edom, to mount Sion, 1 Chron. xiv. and xv. which was the chosen and highly favoured mount; where was afterwards erected, by Solomon, a magnificent and permanent habitation for the God of Jacob, during the

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continuance of the old dispensation; a resemblance of that eternal temple, in which all the fulness of the Godhead hath since dwelt bodily. The divine presence removed at this time to the tribe of Judah, because out of that tribe, after the rejection of Saul, came the great representative, as well as progenitor, of King Messiah.

70. *He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds:* 71. *From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.* 72. *So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.*

The call of David from a sheepfold to a throne teacheth us, that he who hath showed himself faithful in a few and small concerns, is worthy of promotion to more and more important cares; that the qualifications requisite for a due discharge of high offices, are best learned, at first, in an inferior station, especially if it be one that will inure to labour and vigilance; and that kings are to consider themselves as "shepherds;" which consideration would perhaps teach them their duty better than all the precepts in the world. From the last verse, relative to David's manner of conducting himself after his advancement, we learn that integrity and discretion, when they meet in the same person, form a complete ruler, and one fit to represent that blessed person who entered, like his father David, through sufferings into his glory; who governeth his church in wisdom and righteousness; and of whom it is said, by the evangelical prophet, "He shall feed his flock like

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" a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm,
" and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead
" those that are with young." Isa. xl. 11.

SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXIX.

ARGUMENT.

The argument of this Psalm is nearly the same with that of the lxxivth. The church, persecuted and afflicted, sets forth, 1—3. the sacrilegious devastation, and cruel slaughter, made by the enemy, with, 4. the reproach occasioned thereby; 5—7. she prayeth for redress and deliverance; 8, 9. confesseth, and entreateth forgiveness of the sins which had brought these calamities upon her; and then, 10—12. asketh a removal of her reproach and misery; promising, 13. endless gratitude and praise for the same. We meet with passages of this Psalm, Jer. x. 25. 1 Macc. vii. 17. but when it was composed is not known.

1. *O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*

Three deplorable calamities are here enumerated by the faithful; the alienation of God's inheritance, the profanation of the sanctuary, and the desolation of the beloved city. When we represent, in our

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prayers, the sufferings and humiliation of the church, we take an effectual method of awakening the compassion, and recalling the favour, of heaven. Every redeemed soul is the inheritance, the temple, the city of God. When sin enters, and takes possession, the inheritance is alienated, the temple defiled, the city desolated.

2. *The dead bodies of thy servants have they given* to be *meat unto the fowls of heaven; the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.* 3. *Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem: and* there was *none to bury* them.

That horrible carnage which attends the siege and capture of a city, is the fourth of those calamities bewailed in our Psalm. To behold, or even to imagine, heaps of slaughtered bodies lying unburied, and exposed to birds and beasts of prey, is inexpressibly shocking to humanity. But with what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes "dead in trespasses and sins," torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.

4. *We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*

A fifth calamity, incident to an afflicted church, is to become, like captive Israel, the "scorn and "derision" of infidels, who fail not, at such seasons, to reproach her, and blaspheme her God. We know how to answer those who reproach us with our suf-

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ferings, for so their predecessors reproached our Master; but what shall we say, if we have given the enemy occasion to reproach us with our sins? The only real disgrace of religion, is the wickedness of its professors?

5. *How long,* LORD? *Wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?*

Parched and exhausted, amidst the flames of persecution, we behold Sion panting for the comforts of redemption. The extent and continuance of her troubles, cause her to fear a total extermination; and by the questions here asked, she tacitly reminds God of his promises not to give her up, and destroy her "for ever," on account of Messias, whom she was in the fulness of time to bring forth.

6. *Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.* 7. *For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.*

This, though uttered in the form of a wish, or prayer, is to be considered, like many other passages of the same nature, as a prediction of what would afterwards come to pass. Pagan ambition and cruelty were often employed to chastise offending Israel; but were, themselves, notwithstanding, justly punished, in their turn, by other powers raised up for that end. That relation in which the church stands to God, causes him, upon her repentance, to appear in her behalf, and to execute vengeance on her oppressors, who "know him not, nor call upon his name." "We are thine," saith Isaiah, "thou never barest "rule over them, they were not called by thy name:"

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xliii. 19. The church, for her sins, may deserve to suffer; but her enemies are not therefore without guilt, nor will they escape without punishment.

8. *O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low.* 9. *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*

Affliction hath then wrought its intended effect, when it hath convinced us of sin, and led us to repentance; when, brought back by it, like the returning prodigal, to the house and presence of our heavenly Father, we acknowledge our guilt as the cause of our misery, and entreat forgiveness of the one, in order to obtain a release from the other; not pleading our own merits, but the mercies of God our Saviour, and the glory of his name.

10. *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? Let him be known among the heathen in our sight,* by *the revenging of the blood of thy servants* which is *shed;* or, *Let the vengeance of thy servants' blood that is shed, be known among the heathen that is in our sight.*

It is for "the glory of God's name," to deliver his church; because, while she is in trouble, that name is blasphemed by the enemy, as if he wanted either power, or will, to prevent or remove the calamities of his servants. Prayer is therefore here made by the faithful, that God, not to gratify any vindictive spirit of theirs, but to vindicate his own attributes, would break the teeth of the oppressor, and work a public and glorious salvation for his

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chosen: at beholding which, the very adversaries themselves might possibly be converted.

11. *Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die.*

Next to those who had been slain, the case of such as groaned in captivity, lying bound in chains and fetters under sentence of death, to be inflicted at the will of their cruel and insulting conquerors, is recommended to God. The Christian, though he may at present be subject to none of these external calamities, forgets not that he is often persecuted, and led captive, by his own desires, and bound in the chains of his sins; that the world to him is a prison; that sentence of death is passed upon him, and he knoweth not how soon that sentence may be executed. How properly therefore, and how fervently, may he, at all times, pray, "O let the sighing of the prisoner "come before thee; according to the greatness of "thy power preserve thou those that are appointed "to die."

12. *And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O* LORD.

That is, As they have reproached thee with weakness, so manifest to others their weakness, who are but sinful dust and ashes; as they have endeavoured to make thee contemptible, so let the world have just cause to despise them, who have thus presumptuously offended; according as it is written, "Them that "honour me I will honour, and they that despise "me shall be lightly esteemed:" 1 Sam. ii. 30. And,

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however different the appearance of things may now be, this will certainly be found true, in every instance, at the last day.

13. *So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.*

Such is the resolution of a church under persecution; and such ought to be the practice of every church, when delivered out of it, and restored to the favour and protection of her God. The same is the duty of every soul, with regard to afflictions and mercies of a private kind. But how glorious will be the day, when triumphant over sin and sorrow, over every thing that exalteth and opposeth itself, the church universal shall behold the adversary disarmed for ever; while she herself, placed in pastures of joy, and led to the waters of eternal comfort, shall, from age to age, incessantly sing the praises of her great Shepherd and Bishop, her King and her God!

PSALM LXXX.

ARGUMENT.

The church, still in captivity, 1—3. crieth unto God for help and redemption; 4—7. complaineth of her grievous afflictions; 8—13. describeth her former exaltation, and present depression, under the beautiful figure of a Vine: 14—16. returneth again to her supplications, and, 17—19. prayeth for the advent of Messiah, to quicken and comfort her, vowing all loyal obedience, adoration,

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and praise to him, as the author of her salvation.

1. *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest* between *the cherubims, shine forth.*

The Christian church is now become the "Israel" of God: Jesus Christ is the "Shepherd" of this Israel, who leadeth his people "like a flock;" he dwelleth in the midst of them by his Spirit, as of old he dwelt in the holy places, "between the cherubims." Let us beseech him to hearken to our prayers, and to manifest the glory of his power in our defence and deliverance.

2. *Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come* and *save us.*

God is entreated to go forth, in his strength and his salvation, before the tribes of Israel, as formerly in the wilderness. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, are particularly mentioned; perhaps, because, according to the established order, those three tribes immediately followed the ark and cherubim, the symbols of the divine presence. See Numb. ii. 18.

3. *Turn,* or, *restore, us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*

This verse is a kind of chorus, occurring three times in the course of our Psalm. It implies, that the church is in captivity, from which she prayeth to be "restored to her former freedom and prosperity; that she expecteth such restoration, not from any might or merit of her own, but from the grace and mercy of her Saviour; as well knowing, that her

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night can be turned into day, and her winter give place to spring, only by the Sun of righteousness rising, and causing his face to shine upon her desolations. This ought, therefore, to be the wish and the prayer of every persecuted church, and of every afflicted soul.

4. *O* LORD *God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?*

The sins of a people may for a time "separate "between them and their God, and hide his face "from them that he will not hear:" Isa. lix. 2. "he "may cover himself with a cloud, that their prayers "should not pass through:" Lam. iii. 44. and seem to reject even the devotions of his distressed servants, while he is proving the strength of their faith, and the sincerity of their repentance. But if the former be strong, and the latter sincere, they will continue to ask, till they have obtained; nor cease to knock till the door be opened.

5. *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, or, of weeping; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.*

There cannot be a more striking picture of Sion in captivity. Her bread is dipped in tears, and her cup is filled to the brim with them: no time is free from grief and lamentation. They who sin, must submit to penance; which if a man doth not impose on himself, God will impose it on him; whereas, if we judged ourselves, we should not be thus judged of the Lord. The church hath appointed seasons, and given directions, for this purpose: but who observes either the one or the other?

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6. *Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.*

Israel, when forsaken by her God, was a prey for which all the neighbouring nations contended, exulting over her, and scoffing at that condition to which, not their counsels or armies, but her own iniquities, had reduced her. Hence let us learn how to form a just estimate of the real state both of communities and individuals. Righteousness alone exalteth man; sin is his reproach, and will be his destruction.

7. *Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.* See above, ver. 3.

8. *Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.*

God is reminded of the favour once shown by him to the church of Israel, and of that prosperity which she once enjoyed. She is compared to a "vine," removed, from the unkindly soil of Egypt, to the happier regions of Canaan, and there planted by Jehovah, in the place of nations extirpated for their unfruitfulness. The vine is a plant weak and lowly, and needing support; when supported, wild and luxuriant, unless restrained by the pruning knife; capable of producing the most valuable fruit; but, if barren, the most unprofitable among trees, and fit only for the flames. In all these respects it is a lively emblem of the church, and used as such by Isaiah v. 7. by Ezekiel xv. xvii. xix. and by our Lord himself, Matt. xxi. 33. The Christian church, after her redemption, by the death and resurrection

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of Jesus, was planted in the Heathen world, as Israel had been in Canaan; and the description suits one as well as the other.

9. *Thou preparedst* room *before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.* 10. *The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof* were like *the goodly cedars;* or, *and the goodly cedars* were covered *with the boughs thereof.*

As the vine striketh its roots deep into the soil prepared for it, and then diffuseth its numerous branches all around, covering the fertile hills, by the sides of which it is planted, or running up the lofty cedars, to the bodies of which it is joined; such was the growth and fruitfulness of the Israelitish church; but much greater was that of the church Christian. Her roots were fast fixed in the hearts and affections of the faithful, and her boughs shot forth abundantly; they often felt the knife, but increased under it, both in number and vigour; till, at length, she overshadowed the Roman empire with her branches, and replenished the earth with her fruit, grateful to God and man.

11. *She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.*

This relates to the extent of Palestine, which was occupied by the tribes of Israel, even from the Mediterranean "sea," westward, to the "river" Euphrates, eastward. This was promised, Deut. i. 24. "From the river Euphrates to the uttermost sea "shall your coast be;" and fulfilled in the days of Solomon. See 1 Kings iv. 21. Psal. lxxii. 8. To

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the Christian church the whole earth was the land of promise, and the Gospel was preached to all nations: "I will give thee," saith Jehovah to Christ, "the "heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost "parts of the earth for thy possession." Psalm ii. 8.

12. *Why hast thou* then *broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way, do pluck her?*

The Psalmist, having described the exaltation of Israel, under the figure of a vine, proceeds, under the same figure, to lament her depression. She is now represented as deprived of the protection of God, the counsels of the wise, and the arms of the valiant; of all her bulwarks and fortifications, and whatever else could contribute to her defence and security; so that, like a vineyard without a fence, she lay open on every side, to the incursions and ravages of her neighbouring adversaries; who soon stripped her of all that was valuable, and trod her under foot.

13. *The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.*

Fierce and unrelenting, her Heathen persecutor issued, at different times, from his abode, like a "wild boar" out of the forest, resolved not only to spoil and plunder, but to eradicate and extirpate her for ever. Nor let the church Christian imagine, that these things relate only to her elder sister. Greater mercies, and more excellent gifts, should excite in her greater thankfulness and call forth more excellent virtues; otherwise, they will serve only to enhance her account, and multiply her sorrows. If she sin, and fall after the same example of unbelief, she must

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not think to be distinguished in her punishment, unless by the severity of it. She may expect to see the favour of Heaven withdrawn, and the secular arm, instead of supporting, employed to crush her; her discipline may be annihilated, her unity broken, her doctrines perverted, her worship deformed, her practice corrupted, her possessions alienated, and her revenues seized; till at length the word be given from above, and some antichristian power be unchained, to execute upon her the full vengeance due to her crimes. Unclean desires, and furious passions, are the enemies of the soul, which deface her beauty, and devour all the productions of grace in that lesser vineyard of God.

14. *Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine:*
15. *And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch* that *thou madest so strong for thyself.*

The church, thus distressed and desolated, offereth a prayer for a return of the divine favour, and for a gracious visitation from on high; she beseecheth God to look down, with an eye of pity, from heaven, on the vineyard, which his own hands had "planted," and on that royal branch, the family of David, in particular, which he had raised and established for himself, to accomplish his eternal purpose of saving mankind by Messiah, who was, one day, to spring from the root of Jesse. The Chaldee Paraphrast expounds "the branch," of Messiah himself, על מלכא משיחא, "on King Messiah, whom thou hast "established," &c. So do the rabbies, Aben Ezra

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and Obadiah, cited by Dr. Hammond. And the LXX, instead of supposing the word בן "a son," to refer to "vine," and so signify a "branch," which, in the Hebrew style, is "a son of the "vine," have rendered the passage, επι υἱον ανθρωπου, "on the son of man;" an expression actually used by the Psalmist, two verses below. To the advent of this Son of man, Israel was ever accustomed to look forward, in time of affliction: on his second and glorious advent the Christian church must fix her eye, in the day of her calamities.

16. It is *burnt with fire:* it is *cut down,* or, *dug up: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.*

The sad estate of the vineyard is yet again set forth, to excite the compassion of heaven. As to the latter clause of this verse, if it be rendered, as our translators have rendered it, in the present time, it seems to relate to the Israelites, and the destruction made amongst them by the wrath of God. If it have a future rendering, "they shall perish at the "rebuke of thy countenance," it may be supposed to predict the fate of the adversaries, when God should deliver his people out of their hands.

17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man,* whom *thou madest strong for thyself.*

These phrases, "the man of thy right hand, and "the son of man," if at all applicable, in a lower and subordinate sense, to a temporal king of Israel, considered as a representative of Messiah, are most certainly, in their full and prophetical acceptation,

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intended to denote King Messiah himself *. Assured of his coming, the church prayeth that the "hand," the protection and the power of Jehovah might be "upon" him, over him, and with him, in his great undertaking finally to deliver her out of all her troubles, and to "lead her captivity captive."

18. *So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*

The end of our redemption is, that we should serve him who hath redeemed us, and "go back" no more to our old sins. That soul which hath been "quickened," and made alive by Christ, should live to his honour and glory; that mouth which hath been opened by him, can do no less than show forth his praise, and "call upon his" saving "name."

19. *Turn us again, O* LORD *God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.* See ver. 3.

PSALM LXXXI.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, whensoever, or by whomsoever, composed, was, probably, intended to be sung at the feast of trumpets, as also at any other feast-time. It contains, 1—3. an exhortation duly to observe the festivals of the church, 4, 5. as God had appointed, who is introduced expostulating with his

* "Virum dexteræ tuæ:" Davidem a te designatum et confirmatum regem, et in ejus figurâ Christum. BOSSUET.

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people, on account, 6—10. of his mercies, and, 11, 12. their ingratitude, and, 13—16. under the form of a most affectionate wish, renewing his promises, on condition of their obedience.

1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.* 2. *Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.*

If Israelites were thus exhorted to keep their feast days with joy and gladness of heart; to exalt their voices, and join together all their sweetest instruments of music, in honour of him who had rescued them from the Egyptian bondage, and given them a law from Sinai; in what exulting strains ought we to celebrate the festivals of the Christian church? With what triumph of soul, and harmony of affections, are we bound to "sing aloud to God our "strength," who hath redeemed us from death, and published the Gospel from Sion? since, as the apostle saith, "holy days, new moons, and sabbath days," of old "were" only "a shadow of things to come; "but the body is of Christ." Col. ii. 16.

3. *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.*

In the Jewish church, notice was given of feasts, jubilees, &c. by sound of trumpet. All the new moons, or beginnings of months, were observed in this manner; see Numb. x. 1. but on the September new moon, or first day of the seventh month, was kept a great festival, called "the feast of trumpets;" Levit. xxiii. 24. Numb. xxix. 1. which, probably,

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is here intended. This September new moon had a particular regard paid to it, because, according to the old calculation, before Israel came out of Egypt, it was the first new moon in the year, which began upon this day, the first of the (afterwards) seventh month. The tenth of the same month was the great day of atonement; and on the fifteenth was celebrated the feast of tabernacles. See Levit. xxiii. 27. and 34. Our Psalm, therefore, seems to have been designed for the purpose of awakening and stirring up the devotion of the people upon the solemn entrance of a month, in which they were to commemorate so many past blessings, prefigurative of much greater blessings to come. We have now our feast-days, our Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, &c. On these, and all other solemn occasions, let the evangelical trumpet give a sound of victory, of liberty, of joy and rejoicing; of victory over death, of liberty from sin, of joy and rejoicing in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

4. *For this* was *a statute for Israel,* and *a law of the God of Jacob.* 5. *This he ordained in Joseph, for a testimony, when he went out through,* or, *against, the land of Egypt:* where *I heard a language* that *I understood not.*

The meaning is, that the observation of feasts, with blowing of trumpets, was a statute, law, or testimony, ordained in Joseph, or Israel, by God himself, after he had destroyed the Egyptians, and brought his people into the wilderness, where the law was given. Concerning the words, "I heard a "language that I understood not," it is difficult to

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account for the change of person; but the sense seems to be, That the children of Israel received the law, when they had been in bondage under a people of strange and barbarous language, or dialect. The passage is exactly parallel to that in Psal. cxiv. 1. "When Israel went out of Egypt, and the house of "Jacob from a people of strange language," &c.—The new law, with its sacraments and ordinances, was promulged after the spiritual redemption by Christ; as the old law, with its rites and ceremonies, was published, after the temporal deliverance by Moses.

6. *I removed his shoulder from the burden; his hands were delivered from the pots.*

From this verse to the end, it is plain, that God is the speaker. He reminds Israel of their redemption, by his mercy and power, from the burdens and the drudgery imposed on them in Egypt. Moses describeth their then state of servitude, by saying, "The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard "bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all "manner of service in the field;" Exod. i. 14. that is, probably, in making vessels of clay, as this verse seems to imply. Let us remember, that we have been eased of far heavier burdens, delivered from severer task-masters, and freed from a baser drudgery; the intolerable load of sin, the cruel tyranny of Satan, the vile service and bitter bondage of concupiscence.

7. *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.*

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God declares his readiness, at all times, to hear the prayers and relieve the distresses of his people, as he did when they cried unto him in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and received answers from the cloudy pillar. In that deep recess he had fixed his awful throne, and from thence, on proper occasions, he manifested his power and glory, protecting Israel, and confounding their adversaries. In Psalm xcix. 6. it is said of "Moses, Aaron, &c." "They called "upon the Lord, and he answered them: he spake "unto them in the cloudy pillar;" which passage seems exactly parallel to that in the verse under consideration—"Thou calledst, and—I answered thee "in the secret place of thunder." He who spake unto Israel in the cloudy pillar, hath since spoken to us by his Son: he who "proved them at the waters "of Meribah," Exod. xvii. 6, 7. now proves us, by various trials, in the world.

8. *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;* 9. *There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.* 10. *I* am *the* LORD *thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

God here addresseth himself to the Israelites, putting them in remembrance of that first and great commandment against idolatry; of his claim to their obedience, as their God and Saviour; and of his being both able and willing to satisfy the utmost desires and wishes of such, as would apply to him for blessing and comfort. Behold, then, the rebellion, the ingratitude, and the folly, of that man, who saith

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to any creature, "Thou art my god;" who bestoweth on the world that fear, love, and adoration, which are due only to its Creator and Redeemer; who wasteth his days in seeking after happiness, where all, by their inquietude, acknowledge that it is not to be found.

11. *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.* 12. *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust:* and *they walked in their own counsels.*

By the subject of an earthly prince, it is justly deemed a great honour for his sovereign to converse with him, to counsel and advise him: but from sinful dust and ashes, we hear the Majesty of heaven complaining, that he cannot obtain an audience; no one will attend to, or observe, his salutary admonitions. When we see men enabled, by wealth and power, to accomplish the inordinate desires of their hearts, and carry their worldly schemes into execution, without meeting with any obstructions in their way, we are apt to envy their felicity; whereas such prosperity in wickedness is the surest mark of divine displeasure, the heaviest punishment of disobedience, both in individuals and communities. "My people "would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would "none of me: so I gave them up unto their own "hearts' lust; and they walked in their own coun-"sels."

13. *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!* 14. *I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.*

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Such are the tender mercies of our God, that he is not only careful to provide for us the means of salvation, but represents himself as mourning with a paternal affection over his children, when their frowardness and obstinacy disappoint the efforts of his love. One cannot help observing the similitude between the complaint here uttered, and one which hath been since breathed forth, over the same people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have "gathered thy children together, even as a hen ga-"thereth her chickens under her wings, and ye "would not!"

15. *The haters of the* LORD *should have submitted themselves unto him;* or, *should have failed,* or, *been subdued to him: but their time,* i. e. the time of his people, *should have endured for ever.*

The transgressions of the church give her enemies all their power against her, calling the avenger from afar, and setting an edge on the sword of the persecutor. "Where the carcase is," where the spirit of religion is departed, and has left the body to corrupt and decay, "there the eagles are gathered together;" all the instruments of vengeance, terrestrial and infernal, flock, by permission, to the prey. Had not this been the case with regard to Israel, Jerusalem had continued to be, through all ages, what she was in the days of Solomon, the delight of the nations, and the joy of the whole earth.

16. *He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*

That is, the Israelites, if obedient, would still

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have enjoyed the sweets of that good land, in which the Lord their God had placed them, where the fruits of the earth were produced in the highest perfection, and honey streamed from the very rocks, so that no part of the country was without its increase. Upon the same conditions of faith and obedience, do Christians hold those spiritual and eternal good things, of which the pleasant fields and fertile hills of Canaan were sacramental. Christ is the "bread" of life, he is the "rock" of salvation, and his promises are as "honey" to pious minds. But they who reject him, as their Lord and Master, must also lose him as their Saviour and their reward.

SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXII.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist addresseth himself to judges and magistrates; 1. he remindeth them of the presence of that God whom they represent, and to whom they are accountable; 2—4. he exhorteth them to the due discharge of their office; 5. reproveth the ignorance and corruption among them; 6, 7. threateneth their fall and punishment; 8. prayeth for the manifestation of Messiah, and the establishment of his righteous kingdom.

1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.*

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Earthly judicatories are the appointment of God. All magistrates act in his name, and by virtue of his commission. He is invisibly present at their assemblies, and superintends their proceedings. He receives appeals from their wrongful decisions; he will one day re-hear all causes at his own tribunal, and reverse every iniquitous sentence, before the great congregation of men and angels. Unjust judges must either disbelieve or forget all this. God is, in like manner, present to the heart of each individual; he is privy to the various reasonings and pleadings of grace and nature, of principle and interest, in that lesser court; and he is a witness of its determinations; which also will by him be manifested to the world, and openly canvassed, when he sitteth in judgement.

2. *How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid* them *out of the hand of the wicked.*

A charge is here given, by the Spirit of God, to all magistrates, much like that which king Jehoshaphat gave to his judges: 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. "Take "heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but "for the LORD, who is with you in the judgement. "Wherefore now, let the fear of the LORD be upon "you, take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity "with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, "nor taking of gifts." It is the glory of Jehovah and his Christ, to "accept no man's person" in judgement; to regard neither the quality nor the

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station of the offender; but to give to every man, of whatever rank or degree in the world, according to his works. All the sons of Adam were once "poor and fatherless, needy and afflicted," when God took their cause into his own hands, and, by a method consistent with the strictest justice, "deliver-"ed them out of the hand of the wicked one." Every oppressor of the poor is a likeness of that "wicked one," and every upright judge will endeavour to resemble the Redeemer. For this purpose he will be always willing to admit, diligent to discuss, solicitous to expedite, the cause of a poor and injured person, and to afford such an one the speediest, the cheapest, and the most effectual redress, equally contemning the offers of opulence, and the frowns of power. A judge who acts in this manner, takes the readiest way to obtain the favour of God; and the people will be sure to bless him.

5. *They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth,* or, *the land, are out of course;* or, *nod,* or, *shake.*

We here find the Prophet deploring, in magistrates, a method of proceeding contrary to that above described. He laments their voluntary ignorance in the ways of righteousness, and their choosing to "walk in darkness." In judges this is occasioned by "presents and gifts," which, as saith the son of Sirach, "blind the eyes of the wise:" Ecclus. xx. 29. And if once the "pillars" and "foundations" are moved from their integrity, and "shaken" to and fro by every blast of fear and favour, what shall

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become of the political fabric erected upon them? Verily it must fall; and great and terrible will be the fall thereof. A community, whether ecclesiastical or civil, consisteth of great numbers; but its well-being dependeth on a few, in whose hands the administration is placed. When the salt hath lost its savour, the mass must putrefy; when the light becometh darkness, how great must be that darkness!

6. *I have said, Ye* are *gods, and all of you* are *children of the Most High.* 7. *But ye shall die like men,* or, *Adam, and fall like one of the princes.*

It is true, then, that magistrates are exalted above other men; that they are dignified with a commission from above; appointed to be the vicegerents of Heaven upon earth; and therefore called by the name of him in whose name they act. But it is likewise as true, that, notwithstanding all this honour conferred upon them, for the good of others, and of themselves, if they use it aright, they still continue to be the mortal sons of mortal "Adam;" like him, they must fall and perish; God can, at any time, cast them down from their high estate, as he did the Heathen "princes" who misbehaved themselves, and opposed his counsels: death certainly will strip them of all their authority, and lay them low in the grave; from thence the last trumpet shall call them forth, to stand, with the rest of their brethren, before the judgement-seat of Christ, there to take their trial, and receive their everlasting sentence. How necessary oftentimes is this consideration, to check the spirit of tyranny and injustice, to qualify the pride and insolence of office!

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8. *Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.*

A view of that disorder and confusion in which frequently the Jewish nation, as well as the rest of the world, was involved, caused the prophets most earnestly to wish and pray for the coming of that time when "God" should "arise," in the person of Messiah, to visit and "judge the earth;" to deliver it from the powers of darkness, and the tyranny of sin; to "inherit all nations," as purchased and redeemed by him; to establish his church among them; and to rule with a sceptre of righteousness, in the hearts of his people. "Arise" yet once again, O Lord Jesu, from thy throne, where thou sittest at the right hand of the Father; "judge the earth," again corrupted and overwhelmed with iniquity; do away sin, and put an end for ever to the power of Satan; "inherit all nations," redeemed from death and ransomed from the grave; and reign to eternity, King of Righteousness, Peace, and Glory.

PSALM LXXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm the church, 1—8. complaineth to God of the insolence, subtilty, rage, and malice, of her enemies, united in close confederacy against her; 9—12. she prayeth for a manifestation of that power which formerly discomfited Jabin, Sisera, and the Midianites; that so the hostile nations, 13—15. made sensible of the superiority of

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Israel's God, 16—18. might either themselves be induced to acknowledge him, or else, by their destruction, become a warning and admonition to others. As, while the world endureth there will be a church, and while there is a church she will have her enemies, who are to increase upon her as the end approacheth, this Psalm can never be out of date. And to the spiritual adversaries of his soul, every private Christian may apply it at all times.

1. *Keep not thou silence, O God; hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.* 2. *For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up their head.*

The church entreateth God again and again to hear and help her in the day of trouble. Her enemies and haters are here said to be the enemies and haters of God, because Christ and the church, like man and wife, are one; they have one common interest; they have the same friends and the same foes. To him therefore she applieth, terrified by the tumultuous noise of confederated nations, roaring against her like the roaring of the sea, and "lifting up their "heads," as so many monsters of the deep, to devour her at once. When temptations are urgent upon the soul, and the passions rise in arms against her peace and innocence, then do "the enemies of God "make a tumult, and they that hate him lift up "their heads;" and then is the time for her to be instant in prayer.

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3. *They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.* 4. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from* being *a nation; that the name of Irael may be no more in remembrance.*

The combination, so much dreaded, is described as having been formed upon the best principles of secular policy, with much subtilty, and the most determinate malice, against the "people" of God, and his "hidden ones," that is, his peculiar nation, separated from the world, and taken under the cover and protection of his wings. To root up the plantations of paradise, to extirpate the holy seed, to extinguish the very "name of Israel," was the scheme intended by these associated adversaries of Sion. Such are our spiritual enemies; such is their cunning, their rage, and their resolution: what prudence, what vigilance, what courage are necessary, that we may oppose them with success!

5. *For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee.*

When Christ was about to be crucified, it is observed by St. Luke, that "the same day Pilate and "Herod were made friends together; for before "they were at enmity between themselves:" Luke xxiii. 12. And however the enemies of the church may quarrel with one another, when they have nothing else to do, yet if a favourable opportunity offer itself for making an attack upon her, they lay aside their differences, and unite as one man; by no means refusing the friendly aid even of infidels and atheists,

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who are always ready to join in carrying on the war against the common adversary.

6. *The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre:* 8. *Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot.*

These are the names of the confederates. The Edomites were descended from Esau, that old original enemy of Jacob; the Ishmaelites from Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, and sworn foe to Isaac, heir of the promises; the Moabites sprang from Moab, one of the incestuous children of Lot; the Hagarenes were other descendants of Hagar; who the Gebalites were is uncertain; the Ammonites came from Ammon, the son of Lot, and incestuous brother of Moab; the Amalekites were the progeny of Amalek, the grandson of Esau; Gen. xxvi. 16. the Philistines and Tyrians are well known; and to complete all, Assur, or the power of Assyria, was called in by the children of Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites, to assist in the great work of exterminating Israel from the face of the earth. These were the ten nations banded together, by a solemn league and covenant, against the people of God. And as Israel was the grand figure of the Christian church, which is now "the Israel of God," so her enemies are often represented by the above-recited nations, and in prophetical language are called by their names. Every age has its Edomites, and its Ishmaelites, &c. &c. The actors are changed, and

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the scenes are shifted; but the stage and the drama continue the same.

9. *Do unto them as* unto *the Midianites: as* to *Sisera, as* to *Jabin, at the brook of Kison:* 10. Which *perished at Endor: they became* as *dung for the earth.* 11. *Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zeba and as Zalmunna:* 12. *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*

The church, having recounted the enemies which compassed her about on every side, looks up for succour to that Almighty power which had of old so graciously interposed on her behalf, and rescued her from her persecutors, in the days of Deborah, Barak, and Gideon: see Judg. iv. viii. Fully sensible that those deliverances were wrought by the immediate hand of Jehovah, she offers the prayer of faith for a like manifestation of his glory, and a like victory over those who intended, in the same manner, to seize and devour his inheritance. Of how great use and comfort are the Old Testament histories to us, in all our afflictions!

13. *O my God, make them like a wheel;* or, *like thistle-down; as the stubble before the wind.* 14. *As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;* 15. *So persecute,* or, *thou shalt pursue, them with thy tempest, and make,* or, *thou shalt make, them afraid with thy storm.*

The fate of those is here predicted, who invade the inheritance of Jehovah, and say, "Let us take to "ourselves the houses of God in possession." The inconstancy and mutability of their fortunes is resem-

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bled to "thistle-down," or some such light revolving body, and to "stubble" or chaff, whirled about and dissipated by the "wind:" the suddenness, horror, and universality of their destruction, are set forth by the similitude of a "fire" consuming the dry trees in a "forest," or some combustible matter on the "mountains." Such is the storm and tempest of God's indignation, which pursues and terrifies the sacrilegious and ungodly.

16. *Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.* 17. *Let them,* or, *they shall, be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them,* or, *they shall, be put to shame and perish.* 18. *That* men *may know that thou, whose name alone* is JEHOVAH, art *the Most High over all the earth.*

The punishments inflicted by Heaven upon wicked men, are primarily intended to humble and convert them. If they continue incorrigible under every dispensation of merciful severity, they are at last cut off, and finally destroyed; that others, admonished by their example, may repent and return, and give glory to God. Salutary are the afflictions which bring men, and happy the men who are brought by them, to an acknowledgement of "JEHOVAH our "Righteousness," our exalted and glorified Redeemer, "the Most High over all the earth;" whom all must acknowledge, and before whom all must appear to be judged, in the great and terrible day.

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PSALM LXXXIV.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, for the subject-matter of it, bears a resemblance to the xliid. Under the figure of an Israelite, deprived of all access to Jerusalem and the sanctuary, (whether it were David when driven away by Absalom, or any other person in like circumstances at a different time), we are presented with, 1, 2. the earnest longing of a devout soul after the house and presence of God; 3—7. a beautiful and passionate eulogy on the blessedness of his ministers and servants; 8—10. a fervent prayer for a participation of that blessedness; and, 11, 12. an act of faith in his power and goodness, which render him both able and willing to grant requests of this nature.

1. *How amiable* are *thy tabernacles, O* LORD *of hosts!*

Thus ardently doth a banished Israelite express his love for Sion, his admiration of the beauty of holiness. Nay, Balaam himself, when from the top of Peor he saw the children of Israel abiding in their tents, with the Glory in the midst of them, could not help exclaiming, "How goodly are thy tents, O "Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Numb. xxiv. 5. "How amiable," then, may the Christian say, are those eternal mansions, from whence sin and

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sorrow are excluded; how goodly that camp of the saints, and that beloved city, where righteousness and joy reign triumphant, and peace and unity are violated no more; where thou, O blessed Jesu, "Lord "of hosts," King of men and angels, dwellest in glorious majesty, constituting by thy presence the felicity of thy chosen!

2. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the* LORD: *my heart and my flesh crieth out*, or, *shouteth, for the living God.*

It is said of the queen of Sheba, that upon beholding the pleasantness of Jerusalem, the splendour of Solomon's court, and, above all, the magnificence of the temple, with the services therein performed, "there was no more spirit in her:" I Kings x. 5. What wonder, therefore, if the soul should be affected, even to sickness and fainting, while, from this land of her captivity, she beholdeth, by faith, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city and court of the great King, with all the transporting glories of the church triumphant: while, in her meditations, she draweth the comparison between her wretched state of exile upon earth, and the unspeakable blessedness of being delivered from temptation and affliction, and admitted into the everlasting "courts of Jeho-"vah?" Whose "heart and flesh" doth not exult, and "shout" aloud for joy, at a prospect of rising from the bed of death, to dwell with "the living "God;" to see the face of him, "in whom is life, "and the life is the light of men?" John i. 4. Did the Israelites, from all parts of Judea, go up, with the voice of jubilee, to keep a feast at Jerusalem;

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and shall Christians grieve, when the time is come for them to ascend, and to celebrate an eternal festival in heaven?

3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow,* or, *ringdove, a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,* even *thine altars, O* LORD *of hosts, my King and my God.*

The Psalmist is generally supposed, in this verse, to lament his unhappiness, in being deprived of all access to the tabernacle, or temple, a privilege enjoyed even by the birds, who were allowed to build their nests in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary. It is evidently the design of this passage to intimate to us, that in the house, and at the altar of God, a faithful soul findeth freedom from care and sorrow, quiet of mind, and gladness of spirit; like a bird, that hath secured a little mansion, for the reception and education of her young. And there is no heart, endued with sensibility, which doth not bear its testimony to the exquisite beauty and propriety of this affecting image.

4. *Blessed* are *they that dwell in thy house: they will be,* or, *are, still praising thee.*

Here the metaphor is dropped, and the former sentiment expressed in plain language. "Blessed "are" not the mighty and opulent of the earth, but "they that dwell in thy house," the ministers of the eternal temple in heaven, the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; there every passion is resolved into love, every duty into praise; hallelujah succeeds hallelujah; "they are still," still for ever, "praising thee." And blessed, next to them, are

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those ministers and members of the church here below who, in disposition, as well as employment, do most resemble them.

5. *Blessed* is *the man whose strength* is *in thee: in whose heart* are *the ways* of them; Heb. *the ways are in the heart of them.*

Not only they are pronounced blessed who "dwell" in the temple, but all they also who are "travelling" thitherward (as the whole Jewish nation was wont to do three times in a year), and who are therefore meditating on their "journey," and on the "way" which leadeth to the holy city, trusting in God to "strengthen," and prosper, and conduct them to the house of his habitation, the place where his glory dwelleth. Such a company of sojourners are Christians, going up to the heavenly Jerusalem; such ought to be their trust in God, and such the subject of their thoughts *.

6. Who, *passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools.* 7. *They go from strength to strength,* every one

* In ejus animo versantur semitæ ferentes ad templum quo properat. Morali sensu; quicunque sanctus est, quotidie in priora extenditur, et præteritorum obliviscitur, cum Paulo, Phil. iii. 13: Bossuet.—Jerusalem is represented in the New Testament as a type of heaven. I see nothing irrational, therefore, in supposing, that the inspired writer, in describing the ascent to Jerusalem, might have in view also that spiritual progress, leading to the city which is above, the mother of us all. The words before us are certainly very applicable to the advances made, in this progress, from strength to strength, from one stage of Christian perfection to another. Merrick.

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of them *in Zion appeareth before God;* or, *the God of gods appeareth,* i. e. to them *in Zion.*

After numberless uncertain conjectures offered by commentators upon the construction of these two verses, it seemeth impossible for us to attain to any other than a general idea of their true import; which is this, that the Israelites, or some of them, passed, in their way to Jerusalem, through a valley that had the name of "Baca," a noun derived from a verb which signifies to "weep;" that in this valley they were refreshed by plenty of water; that with renewed vigour they proceeded from stage to stage, until they presented themselves before God in Zion. The present world is to us this valley of weeping; in our passage through it, we are refreshed by the streams of divine grace, flowing down from the great fountain of consolation; and thus are we enabled to proceed from one degree of holiness to another, until we come to the glorified vision of God in heaven itself. Mr. Merrick's poetical version of this passage is extremely beautiful, and applies at once to the case of the Israelite, and to that of the Christian:—

Blest who, their strength on thee reclined,
Thy seat explore with constant mind,
And, Salem's distant towers in view,
With active zeal their way pursue:
Secure the thirsty vale they tread,
While, call'd from out their sandy bed
(As, down in grateful showers distill'd,
The heavens their kindliest moisture yield),
The copious springs their steps beguile,
And bid the cheerless desert smile.

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From stage to stage advancing still,
Behold them reach fair Sion's hill,
And, prostrate at her hallow'd shrine,
Adore the Majesty divine.

8. *O* LORD *God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob.* 9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

After extolling the happiness of those who dwelt in the temple, and of those who had access to it, the Psalmist breaks forth into a most ardent prayer to his God, for a share in that happiness. He addresseth him as "the Lord of hosts," almighty in power; as "the God of Jacob," infinite in mercy and goodness to his people; as their "shield," the object of all their trust for defence and protection; and beseecheth him to "look upon the face of his anoint-"ed," that is, of David, if he were king of Israel when this Psalm was written; or rather of Messiah *, in whom God is always well pleased; for whose sake he hath mercy upon us, through whose name and merits our prayers are accepted, and the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers.

10. *For a day in thy courts* is *better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

One day spent in meditation and devotion, affordeth a pleasure, far, far superior to that which an age of worldly prosperity could give. Happier is the least and lowest of the servants of Jesus, than the greatest and most exalted potentate who knoweth him not. And he is no proper judge of blessedness,

* "Christi tui;" regis, qui Christi figura. BOSSUET.

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who hesitates a moment to prefer the condition of a penitent in the porch, to that of a sinner on the throne. If this be the case upon earth, how much more in heaven? O come that one glorious day, whose sun shall never go down, nor any cloud obscure the lustre of his beams; that day, when the temple of God shall be opened in heaven, and we shall be admitted to serve him for ever therein!

11. *For the* LORD *God is a sun and shield: the* LORD *will give grace and glory: no good* thing *will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Jesus Christ is our "Lord," and our "God;" he is a "sun" to enlighten and direct us in the way, and a "shield" to protect us against the enemies of our salvation; he will give "grace" to carry us on "from strength to strength," and "glory" to crown us when we "appear before him in Zion;" he will "withhold" nothing that is "good" and profitable for us in the course of our journey, and will himself be our reward when we come to the end of it.

12. *O* LORD *of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

While, therefore, we are strangers and sojourners here below, far from that heavenly country where we would be, in whom should we trust to bring us to the holy city, new Jerusalem, of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple, but in thee, O Saviour and Redeemer, who art the Head of every creature, the Captain of the armies of heaven and earth, the Lord of hosts, and the King of glory? "Blessed," thrice "blessed, is the man that trusteth "in thee."

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PSALM LXXXV.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, appointed by the church to be used on Christmas-day, 1—3. celebrateth the redemption of the Israel of God from their spiritual captivity under sin and death; 4—7. teacheth us to pray for the full accomplishment of that redemption in ourselves; 8—11. describeth the incarnation of Christ, with the joyful meeting of Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, at his birth, and, 12, 13. the blessed effects of his advent.

1. LORD, *thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.* 2. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.* 3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned* thyself *from the fierceness of thine anger.*

These three verses speak of the deliverance from captivity, as already brought about; whereas, in the subsequent parts of the Psalm, it is prayed for and predicted, as a thing future. To account for this, some suppose that the Psalmist first returns thanks for a temporal redemption, and then prophesies of the spiritual salvation by Messiah. Others are of opinion, that the same eternal redemption is spoken of throughout, but represented, in the beginning of the Psalm, as already accomplished in the

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divine decree, though the eventual completion was yet to come. The difficulty, perhaps, may be removed, by rendering these first three verses in the present time; "LORD, thou art favourable to thy "land, thou bringest back the captivity of thy peo- "ple," &c. that is, Thou art the God whose property it is to do this, and to show such mercy to thy people, who therefore call upon thee for the same. But, indeed, to us Christians, who now use the Psalm, the difference is not material; since a part of our redemption is past, and a part of it is yet to come, for the hastening of which latter we daily pray. God hath already been exceedingly gracious and "favourable" to the whole "earth," in "bringing "back," by the resurrection of Jesus, the spiritual "captivity of" his people; he hath himself, in Christ, "borne," and so taken away, "the iniquity "of his people;" he hath "covered all their sins," that they should no more appear in judgement against them: propitiated by the Son of his love, he hath removed his "wrath," and "turned himself from "the fierceness of his anger." So exactly and literally do these words describe the means and method of Gospel salvation, that a Christian can hardly affix any other ideas to them.

4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? 7. Show us thy mercy, O LORD, *and grant us thy salvation.*

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The ancient church is here introduced as petitioning for the continuation and completion of those blessings which had been mentioned in the foregoing verses, namely, that God would "turn" his people from their captivity, and "cause his anger towards "them to cease;" that he would "revive" them from sin and sorrow, and give them occasion to "rejoice "in him," their mighty deliverer; that he would "show them" openly that "mercy" of which they had so often heard, and "grant them that salvation," or that "Saviour," that JESUS, who had been so long promised to mankind. And although it be true that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and hath virtually procured all these blessings for the church, yet do "we" still continue to pray, in the same words, for the actual application of them all to ourselves, by the conversion of our hearts, the justification of our persons, the sanctification of our souls, and the glorification of our bodies. For this last blessing of redemption, "the whole creation waiteth, groaning, "and travailing in pain together, UNTIL NOW." Rom. viii. 22.

8. *I will hear what God the* LORD *will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly:* or, *that they may not turn again to folly.*

The Prophet having prayed, in the name of the church, that Jehovah would "show them his mercy, "and grant them his salvation," declares himself resolved, concerning this "salvation, to enquire and "search diligently, what, or what manner of time "the Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify,

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" when it testified beforehand the coming of Christ, " and the glory that should follow ;" see 1 Pet. i. 10. he would attend to " what God the LORD " should say," and report it to the world. Now, what was the message which the prophets had commission to deliver from God, but that he would " speak peace," or reconciliation through a Saviour, " to his people, and to his saints?" The Gospel is accordingly styled by St. Peter, " the word which " God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching " peace by Jesus Christ:" Acts x. 36. And what was the end of this reconciliation between God and men, but that men should become and continue the servants of God ; that, being washed from their sins by the blood of Christ, and renewed in their minds by the grace of Christ, they should walk in the paths of wisdom and holiness, and " turn not again to the " folly" they had renounced ?"

9. *Surely his salvation* is *nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.*

God, who " calleth things that be not as though " they were," teacheth his prophets to do likewise. The Psalmist therefore speaks with assurance of the " Saviour," as if he then saw him before his eyes, healing, by the word of his power, the bodies and the souls of men upon earth, and manifesting forth his " glory," in human nature, to all such as, with a holy " fear," and filial reverence, believed on him. St. John himself hardly useth plainer language when he saith, " the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, " or tabernacled, among us; and we beheld his glory, " the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,

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"full of grace and truth;" John i. 14. The body of Christ was the true "tabernacle," or temple; his Divinity was the GLORY which resided there, and filled that holy place. The church is his mystical "body;" by his Spirit he now and ever "dwelleth "in our land; and his salvation is always nigh them "that fear him;" as saith the holy Virgin in her song. "His mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all "generations."

10. *Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed* each other. 11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could not be his enemy; but Truth exacted the performance of God's threat, "The soul that sinneth, it shall "die;" and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due. Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now there is no religion upon earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God's word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace. Mahomet's prayer, were it the prayer of a righteous man and a prophet, could not satisfy divine justice; the blood of bulls and goats were always insufficient for that purpose, being a figure only for the time then present, which ceased of course when the reality appeared. "Sacrifice and burnt-offering

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"thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come." A God incarnate reconciled all things in heaven and earth. When Christ appeared in our nature, the promise was fulfilled, and "Truth sprang out of the "earth." And now Righteousness, "looking down "from heaven," beheld in him every thing that she required; an undefiled birth, a holy life, an innocent death; a spirit and a mouth without guile, a soul and a body without sin. She saw, and was satisfied, and returned to earth. Thus all the four parties met again in perfect harmony: Truth ran to Mercy, and embraced her; Righteousness to Peace, and kissed her. And this could happen only at the birth of Jesus, in whom "the tender Mercy "of our God visited us, and who is the Truth; who "is made unto us Righteousness, and who is our "Peace." See Luke i. 78. John xiv. 6. 1 Cor. i. 30. Ephes. ii. 14. Those that are thus joined, as attributes, in Christ, ought not, as virtues, to be separated in a Christian, who may learn how to resemble his blessed Lord and Master, by observing that short, but complete, rule of life, comprehended in the few following words: Show Mercy, and speak Truth: do Righteousness, and follow Peace. See St. Bernard, in his Sermon on the Annunciation; and, from him, bishop Andrews on these two verses of our Psalm *.

* Soluta captivitate, felicem populi statum designat, omni bonorum copia et virtutibus florentis; quæ maximè impleta sunt, postquam Christus, ipsa veritas, idemque pax nostra, terra ortus est. BOSSUET.

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12. *Yea, the* LORD *shall give* that which is *good; and our land shall yield her increase.*

Unless God vouchsafe a gracious rain from above, the earth cannot "yield her increase." The effects of the incarnation of Christ, the descent of the Spirit, and the publication of the Gospel among men, are frequently set forth in Scripture under images borrowed from that fruitfulness caused in the earth by the rain of heaven. Thus Isaiah: "Drop down, ye "heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down "righteousness: let the earth open, and let them "bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring "up together. xlv. 8. I will pour water upon him "that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I "will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing "upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as "among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. "xliv. 3. As the rain cometh down from heaven, "and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth "and bud; so shall my word be," &c. lv. 10. Give us evermore, O Lord, "that which is good, that "our land may yield her increase;" give us that good gift, the gift of thy Spirit, that we be "neither "barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our "Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i. 8.

13. *Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set* us *in the way of his steps;* or, *and shall set his steps in the way.*

Upon the appearance of the Redeemer, "Righ-"teousness" is represented "as going before him," like his harbinger the Baptist, to prepare and make

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ready his way. In that way, the way of righteousness, "he set his steps," and walked therein, without the least deviation, until he had finished his appointed course. Draw us, blessed Jesu, and we will run after thee, in the path of life; let thy mercy pardon us, thy truth enlighten us, thy righteousness direct us, to follow thee, O Lamb of God, whithersoever thou goest, through poverty, affliction, persecution, and death itself; that our portion may be for ever in thy kingdom of peace and love.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXVI.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is entitled, "A prayer of David," and supposed to have been written in some of his great distresses. Like others of the same kind, it is calculated for the use of the church during her sufferings here below, by which she is conformed to the image of the true David, that man of sorrows. It contains, 1. an earnest supplication, grounded on the poverty, 2. the holiness, faith, 3. importunity, and, 4. the devotion, of the suppliant; and on, 5—7. the goodness, and, 8. power of God, 9, 10. to be one day acknowledged by all nations, at their conversion. After this, follows, 11. a petition for wisdom, strength, and

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singleness of heart; 12, 13. a thanksgiving for redemption; 14. a complaint of persecution from the wicked; 15. an act of faith; 16, 17. a prayer for help and salvation.

1. *Bow down thine ear, O* LORD, *and hear me: for I* am *poor and needy.*

All prayer is founded on a sense of our own wants, and God's ability to supply them. In the sight of his Maker, every sinner is "poor and needy;" and he must become so in his own, that his petitions may be regarded; he must pray, with the humility and importunity of a starving beggar, at the gate of heaven, if he expect the great King "to bow down his "ear and hear him." "The prayer of the humble," saith the wise son of Sirach, "pierceth the clouds; "and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted; and "will not depart till the Most High shall behold:" Ecclus. xxxv. 17. The blessed Jesus, "though he "was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and had "not where to lay his head;" nor is it to be doubted, but that, in his state of humiliation, he oftentimes made his prayer to the Father in these very words; "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, and hear me; for "I am poor and needy." If he sued in such a form of words for us, shall we think of suing in any other form for ourselves?

2. *Preserve thou my soul, for I* am *holy; O thou my God, save thy servant, that trusteth in thee.*

The word here translated "holy," is, חסיד, the same which is used in the xvith Psalm; "Thou shalt "not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And

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indeed, if we understand "holiness" in its strict sense, no one but "he whom the Father sanctified, "and sent into the world," to redeem lost man, could say to him, "Preserve my soul, for I am holy." But the word properly signifies, "good, merciful, "pious, devoted to the service of God," &c. The Christian, therefore, only pleads, in this expression, his relation to Christ, as being a member of Christ's body, the church, and a partaker of the gifts, which, by virtue of that membership, he has received through the Spirit of holiness. So that this first part of the verse, "Preserve my soul, for I am "holy," when repeated by us, is equivalent to another passage in the Psalms, "I am THINE, O "save me:" cxix. 94. The latter member of the verse under consideration teaches us to pray for help and salvation, as the "servants" of God, whose eyes therefore look naturally to him, "as the eyes of ser- "vants," in affliction, "look unto the hand of their "masters;" Psal. cxxiii. 2. And happy, surely, are we in a Master, who himself, for our salvation, once lived, and prayed, and suffered, and died, in "the "form of a servant." Phil. ii. 7.

3. *Be merciful unto me, O* LORD, *for I cry unto thee daily.*

There is no man upon the earth, but needeth "mercy;" he who is truly sensible of his need, will "cry daily" for it; and he who doth so, may comfort himself with the hope of obtaining it. The prayers of Jesus, poured forth for the salvation of his mystical body, in the days of his flesh, were frequent and mighty; his intercession for us in heaven is con-

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tinual. Does the man believe this, who prays not at all, or who prays without devotion?

4. *Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O* LORD, *do I lift up my soul.*

Sorrow was the portion of Christ in this world, and the church hath no reason to expect any other from it. He that would have real "joy" in his heart, must beseech God to give it him, for no creature hath it to give. Nay, the love of the world must be renounced, before this divine gift can even be "received." The affections must be loosened from earth, and "lifted up" to heaven, on the wings of faith and love; for in the soul that is full of sensual pleasures and indulgences, there is neither room nor taste for spiritual delights.

5. *For thou,* LORD, art *good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*

We are encouraged to "lift up our souls to God" in prayer, because his "goodness," and the "plente-"ousness of his mercy" in Christ Jesus, incline him to give his holy Spirit of peace and comfort to "all "that call upon him." His favour is no longer confined to Judea; there is now no distinction of age, condition, or country: but the sinner, whoever or wherever he be, if he call upon the saving name of Jesus, is heard, pardoned, and accepted, upon the terms of the evangelical covenant.

6. *Give ear, O* LORD, *unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.* 7. *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me.*

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In confidence of an "answer," nourished and strengthened by all the foregoing considerations, the suppliant renews his prayer, while "the day of "trouble" lasts; and that day will not end, but with this mortal pilgrimage; since he who loves his country, will ever be uneasy while he is detained among strangers and enemies, perils and temptations. But the trouble is overpaid with profit, which rendereth us adepts in the practice of devotion, which convinceth us that we are abroad, and maketh us to wish and sigh for our true and only home.

8. *Among the gods* there is *none like unto thee, O* LORD; *neither* are there any works *like unto thy works.*

Another reason why supplication should be made to Jehovah, is his infinite superiority over all those that, by infatuated men, were ever called "gods." From the ancient idolatry, which taught adoration to the sun, moon, and stars, to the light and the air, we have been delivered by the Gospel: nor do we any longer profess to worship Jupiter, and the other Heathen gods and goddesses. But do not many still trust in idols, and have they not, in effect, other objects of worship, from whose hands they expect their reward? Are not the hearts of the covetous, the ambitious, the voluptuous, so many temples of Mammon or Plutus, of Jupiter or Mars, of Bacchus, Comus, and Venus? But what are these deities; what is their power; and what are their gifts? What is the whole world, and all that is therein, when compared with its Maker and Redeemer? what is it when applied to, for the ease and comfort of a

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wounded spirit?—"Among the gods there is none "like unto thee, O LORD; neither are there any "works like unto thy works!"

9. *All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O* LORD; *and shall glorify thy name.*

The Psalmist predicteth that this superiority of Jehovah should one day be acknowledged throughout all the earth, when "neither in Jerusalem only, nor "in the mount of the Samaritans," but in every place, "should men worship the Father;" John iv. 21. when he who "made all nations" by his Son, should by that Son redeem all nations, bringing them from the world to the church, there to "worship "before" the true God, and "in songs of praise to "glorify his holy name." If in these our times, we behold the nations again falling away from God, departing from the purity of their faith, and leaving their first love, let us comfort ourselves with looking forward to that scene of things described by St. John, in which we hope to bear a part hereafter: "I be-"held, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man "could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and "people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and "before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and "palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, "saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon "the throne, and unto the Lamb." Rev. vii. 9.

10. *For thou* art *great, and doest wondrous things: thou* art *God alone.*

"Great" is Jehovah in his power, in his wisdom, in his mercy; "wonderful" in the creation of the

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world, wonderful in the preservation and the government of it, wonderful in its redemption; wonderful in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, in the descent of the Spirit, the propagation of the Gospel, the sufferings of saints, and the conversion of sinners; most wonderful will he be when he shall raise the dead, judge the world, condemn the wicked, and glorify the righteous. And then shall every tongue confess, "Thou art God "alone!"

11. *Teach me thy way, O* LORD; *I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*

It is the continual subject of the Mediator's intercession above, and of our prayers below, that we may be "taught the way of Jehovah," the way to life eternal, prepared for us, through faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; that being so taught, we may likewise be enabled "to walk in the truth," without error in doctrine, or deviation from duty; believing all things which God hath revealed, and doing whatsoever he hath commanded us; that the affections of the "heart" may be withdrawn from other objects, and, being no longer divided between God and the world, become "united" in the filial "fear of his name," as the grand principle of action.

12. *I will praise thee, O* LORD *my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore.*
13. *For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.*

Gratitude for mercies already received, will obtain a continuance and increase of those mercies. The

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church is never in so afflicted a state, but she hath still reason to intermingle hallelujahs with her hosannas, and, in the midst of her most fervent prayers, to "praise the LORD her God with all her heart, "and to glorify his name for evermore;" since, whatever she may suffer upon earth (and even those sufferings will turn to her advantage), "great," most undoubtedly, "hath his mercy been toward her, in "delivering" her, by the resurrection of Jesus from the bondage of sin, the dominion of death, and the bottomless pit of "hell."

14. *O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent* men *have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before their eyes.*

From praises we return again to prayers. When Christ was upon earth, we know the treatment he met with from "proud and violent men, who had "not set God before their eyes;" from self-righteous Jews, and conceited Gentiles, who rose up, and took counsel together, against him. What his church afterwards suffered at the hands of the same enemies, is likewise well known. How much more she is to undergo in her latter days, we know not as yet; but this we do know, that the Spirit of the world stands, now and ever, in opposition to the spirit of God; its design is always the same, although its methods of working be divers. Nor can we be ignorant of those domestic adversaries, that assembly of haughty and turbulent passions, which are continually making insurrections, and destroying the peace of the soul. So that either from without, or

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from within, every one, who is a Christian in deed, shall be sure to have his portion of tribulation.

15. *But thou, O* LORD, *art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long suffering, and plenteous in goodness and truth.*

Having taken a view of those that are against us, it is now time to look up to those that are with us. And can we have better friends, than all these gracious and favourable attributes of Heaven? Can more comfortable and joyful tidings be brought us, than that God loveth us with a father's love; that he is ready to pardon, slow to anger; and that we have his truth pledged for the performance of his mercy? What a fountain of consolation is here opened for the afflicted Christian! "Let him drink, and forget "his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Prov. xxxi. 7.

16. *O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.*

On the consideration of the above-mentioned attributes, a petition is in this verse put up to God, that he would "turn" his face towards us; that he would of his "mercy" pardon us, by his grace "strengthen" us, and by his power "save" us from all our adversaries. Every Christian is the "servant of God," and "the son of his handmaid," the church; which may say, in the same spirit of humility and obedience with the blessed Virgin, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

17. *Show me a token for good, that they which*

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hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because thou, LORD, *hast holpen me, and comforted me.*

Many outward signs and "tokens" of the divine favour were in old time vouchsafed to patriarchs, prophets, and kings of Israel. The law itself was a collection of external and sacramental figures of grace and mercy. All these centred and had their accomplishment in that grand and everlasting sign and token of God's love to man, the incarnation of Christ, which all faithful people from the beginning wished and prayed for. On this sign, the Christian looks with joy, as the great proof that God has "helped him and comforted him;" while his faith in it doth not fail, he hath the witness in himself, and his actions declare as much to all around him; "that they which hate him may be "ashamed" and converted, before that day come, when shame shall be fruitless, and conversion impossible.

PSALM LXXXVII.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet, 1—3. celebrates the stability and felicity of Sion; 4, 5, foretels the accession of the Gentiles to her, and, 6. their enrolment among her citizens; 7. extols her as the fountain of grace and salvation. The Psalm was probably penned, on a survey of the city of David, just after the buildings of it were finished.

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1. *His foundation* is *in the holy mountains*: or, *It is his*, i. e. *God's foundation in the mountains of holiness* *! 2. *The* LORD *loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

The Psalmist, after having meditated on the strength, the beauty, and the glory of Jerusalem, being smitten with the love of the holy city, and imagining the thoughts of his hearers, or readers, to have been employed on the same subject, breaks forth at once in this abrupt manner, "It is his "foundation on the holy mountains." By "the holy "mountains" are meant those hills of Judea, which Jehovah had chosen, and separated to himself from all others, whereon to construct the highly favoured city and temple. As the dwellings of Jacob, in the promised land, were beloved by him more than the dwellings of other nations, so he "loved the gates "of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Jerusalem was exalted and fortified by its situation; but much more so by the protection of the Almighty. What Jerusalem was, the Christian church is; "built" by God "on the foundation of the "apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being "the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, "fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple "in the Lord:" Ephes. ii. 20. It is "HIS founda-"tion in the holy mountains;" she is beloved of

* Some commentators suppose this verse to be a part of the title, which will then run thus: "For the sons of Korah, a "Psalm; a song, when he laid the foundation on the holy "mountains."

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God above the kingdoms and empires of the earth, which rise and fall only to fulfil the divine counsels concerning her. When those counsels shall be fulfilled, in the salvation of all believers, the world, which subsists only for their sake, will be at an end.

3. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*

As the Prophet began, in a rapture, to speak of the holy city, so now, in fresh transport, he changes the person, and suddenly addresses himself to it. The old Jerusalem was "the city of God, and glo-"rious things were therefore said of it" by the Spirit. Pleasant for situation, and magnificent in its buildings, it was the delight of nations, the joy of the whole earth; there was the royal residence of the kings of Judah; there was the temple, and the ark, and the glory, and the King of heaven dwelling in the midst of her; her streets were honoured with the footsteps of the Redeemer of men; there he preached, and wrought his miracles, lived, died, and rose again; thither he sent down the Spirit, and there he first laid the foundations of his church. To know what "glorious things" are said of the NEW Jerusalem, the reader must peruse Isa. lx. and Rev. xxi. xxii.

4. *I will make mention of Rahab,* or, *Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia,* or, *Arabia, this* man *was born there.* 5. *And of Sion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her.*

The accession of the nations to the church is ge-

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nerally supposed to be here predicted. God declares by his Prophet, " I will make mention of," or " cause " to be remembered, Egypt and Babylon," the old enemies of Israel, " to" or " among them " that know me," that is, in the number of my worshippers; " Behold" also " Philistia, and Tyre, " with Arabia;" these are become mine; " this," or each of these, " is born there," i. e. in the city of God; they are become children of God, and citizens of Sion; so that " of Sion," or the church, " it " shall be said, This and that man," Heb. " a man " and a man *," i. e. great numbers of men in succession, " are born in her;" alluding to the multitudes of converts under the Gospel, the sons of that Jerusalem, " which is the mother of us all;" Gal. iv. 26. " and the Highest himself shall establish her;" as he saith, " Upon this rock will I build my church, " and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 18.

6. *The* LORD *shall count when he writeth up the people,* that *this* man *was born there.*

* Dr. Durell renders איש ואיש, " The man, even the man," that is, " The man of men;" or, " The greatest of all men." The reduplication, he thinks, according to the original phraseology, must mean the superlative, or highest degree. He adds—According to this interpretation, every one will see who this eminent personage was to be, from whose birth Zion (used by a synecdoche for Judea) was to acquire so much glory. The latter hemistic—" And the Highest himself shall establish her"—seems to me to have reference, not to God the Father, but to his Son; it appearing to be exegetical of the preceding one, and to describe his Divine, as the other does his human nature. CRITICAL REMARKS, p. 167.

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In the book of life, that register of heaven, kept by God himself, our names are entered, not as born of flesh and blood by the will of man, but as born of water and the Spirit by the will of God; of each person it is written, "that he was born there," in the church and city of God. That is the only birth which we ought to value ourselves upon, because that alone gives us our title to "the inheritance of "the saints in light. In Jesus Christ there is neither "Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, "barbarian, Scythian," noble nor ignoble, "bond nor "free; but Christ is all, and in all." Col. iii. 11*.

7. *As well the singers as the players on instruments* shall be there; *all my springs* are *in thee.*

The literal version of the words, as Dr. Chandler observes, seems to be—"Cantantes erunt, sicut cho-"ream ducentes: omnes fontes mei in te." "They "shall sing like those that lead up the dance," i. e. most joyfully; singing and dancing frequently accompanying one another. And the burden of the song thus joyfully sung in praise of Sion, was to be this, "All my springs," or fountains, "are in thee." And if such be indeed the incomparable excellence of the church, and such the benefits of her communion, as they have been set forth in the foregoing verses, what anthem better deserves to be performed by all her choirs? In thee, O Sion, is the fountain of salva-

* Dr. Durell thinks this verse relates to the pedigree of our Lord, recorded among the Jews, and given us by the evangelists —"The Lord will have this recorded, in registering the "people, that HE," the איש ואיש mentioned above, "was born "there."

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tion, and from thee are derived all those springs of grace, which flow, by the divine appointment, while the world lasts, for the purification and refreshment of mankind upon earth.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, as Mr. Mudge observes, may well be said to be composed, according to its title, לְעַנּוֹת, to create dejection, to raise a pensive gloom or melancholy in the mind; the whole subject of it being quite throughout heavy, and full of the most dismal complaints. The nature and degree of the sufferings related in it; the strength of the expressions used to describe them; the consent of ancient expositors; the appointment of the Psalm by the church to be read on Good Friday; all these circumstances concur in directing an application of the whole to our blessed Lord. His unexampled sorrows, both in body and soul; his desertion in the day of trouble; his bitter passion, and approaching death; with his frequent and fervent prayers for the accomplishment of the promises, for the salvation of the church through him, and for the manifestation of God's glory:

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these are the particulars treated of in this instructive and most affecting composition *.

1. *O* LORD *God of my salvation, I have cried day* and *night before thee: 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.*

We hear in these words the voice of our suffering Redeemer. As man, he addresseth himself to his Father, "the LORD God of his salvation," from whom he expected, according to the promises, a joyful and triumphant resurrection: he pleadeth the fervency and importunity of his prayers, offered up continually, "day and night," during the time of his humiliation and sufferings; and he entreateth to be heard in these his supplications for his body mystical, as well as his body natural; for himself, and for us all.

3. *For my soul is full of troubles; and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.*

Is not this exactly parallel to what he said in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto "death?" "Full," indeed, "of troubles" was thy "soul," O blessed Jesus, in that dreadful hour, when, under the united weight of our sins and sor-

* Cum Psalmis xxii. et lxix. ad omnia convenit Psalmus lxxxviii., quod argumento est, eum eodem modo a nobis esse explicandum. Continet igitur pariter orationem Christi ad Patrem e cruce fusam. Auctor hujus Cantici non alium in finem illi titulum dedit משכיל, "erudientis," quam ut Ecclesia posteriorum temporum ex eo disceret ultima hæc Messiæ fata. VITRINGA, Observat. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 9.

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rows, thou wert sinking into "the grave," in order to raise us out of it. Let us judge of thy love by thy sufferings, and of both by the impossibility of our fully comprehending either.

4. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man* that hath *no strength.*

Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted. He who was the fountain of immortality, he from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was "counted with them that go down into the pit;" he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind; nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, "as a "man that had no strength," no power or might, to help and to save himself. "His strength went from "him; he became weak, and like another man." The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He "saved others, himself he cannot save."

5. *Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from thy hand.*

"Free among the dead;" that is, set at liberty, or dismissed from the world, and separated from all communication with its affairs, as dead bodies are; "like" other "corpses that lie in the grave, whom "thou rememberest no more," i. e. as living objects of providence upon earth: in this sense, "they are "cut off from God's hand," which held and sup-

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ported them in life. And in no other sense can these expressions be understood; since to imagine that the Psalmist, who so often speaks in plain terms of the resurrection, should here, when personating Messiah, deny that doctrine, would be a conceit equally absurd, and impious.

6. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.* 7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted* me *with all thy waves.*

The sufferings of Jesus are represented by his being plunged into a dark and horrible abyss, with the indignation of God, due to our sins, resting upon him, and all the waves of affliction rolling over him. The same image is used in Psal. lxix. and many other places.

8. *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I* am *shut up, and I cannot come forth.*

At the apprehension of Christ, "All his disciples "forsook him and fled:" Matt. xxvi. 56. Peter denied and abjured his Master, as if his acquaintance had been a disgrace, and "an abomination:" at the crucifixion, it is observed by St. Luke, that "all his "acquaintance stood afar off, beholding these "things;" xxiii. 49. beholding the innocent victim environed by his enemies, and at length "shut up" in the sepulchre. The day must come, when each person, who reads this, shall be forsaken by the whole world; when relations, friends, and acquaintance, shall retire, unable to afford him any help and assistance; when he must die, and be confined in the prison of the grave, no more to "come forth," until

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that great Easter of the world, the general resurrection. In the solitary and awful hour of our departure hence, let us remember to think on the desertion, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Redeemer.

9. *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.*

This verse contains a reiteration of the complaint and prayer made at the beginning of the Psalm. These are some of the "strong cryings with tears," which, during the course of his intercessions for us upon earth, the Son of God poured forth "in the "days of his flesh." Heb. v. 7.

10. *Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead rise* and *praise thee?* 11. *Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave*, or, *thy faithfulness in destruction?* 12. *Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

It hath been sometimes thought, that these verses imply a denial, or at least a doubt, of the resurrection from the dead; whereas they contain, in reality, the most powerful plea that Christ himself, in his prayers to the Father, could urge for it; namely, that, otherwise, man would be deprived of his salvation, and God of the glory thence accruing. "Wilt thou "show wonders to the dead," while they continue in that state; or if thou shouldst, will they be sensible of those wonders, and make thee due returns of thankfulness? "Shall the dead rise up" in the congregation, "and praise thee?" Must they not live

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again to do that? "Shall thy loving kindness" to the sons of Adam, in me their Redeemer, "be declared," shall the Gospel be preached, "in the grave?" "or thy faithfulness," in accomplishing the promises concerning this loving kindness, shall it be manifested "in that destruction" wrought by death upon the bodies of men? "Shall thy wonders," the wonders of light, and life, and salvation, "be known in the "dark" tomb; "and thy righteousness," which characterizes all thy dispensations, shall it be remembered and proclaimed "in the land of" silence and "forgetfulness?" A Christian, upon the bed of sickness, may undoubtedly plead with God, in this manner, for a longer continuance of life, to glorify him here upon earth. But every respite of that kind can be only temporary. All men, sooner or later, must die: and then they can never more experience the mercies, or sing the praises of God, unless they rise again. So that if the argument hold in one case, it certainly holdeth still stronger in the other.

13. *But unto thee have I cried, O* LORD, *and in the morning shall my prayer prevent me.* 14. LORD, *why castest thou off my soul?* why *hidest thou thy face from me?*

Since therefore the wonders, the loving kindness, the faithfulness, and the righteousness of God, cannot be manifested by man's redemption, if Messiah be left under the dominion of death, he redoubles his prayers for the promised deliverance; and speaks of his redemption in the hour of sorrow, as in Psal. xxii. 1. "My God, my God, why hast thou for-"saken me?" &c.

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15. *I* am *afflicted and ready to die from* my *youth up:* while *I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted;* Heb. *I am distressed, not knowing which way to turn myself**. 16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.* 17. *They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.*

We are not to imagine that the holy Jesus suffered for us only at Gethsemane, and on mount Calvary. His whole life was one continued passion; a scene of labour and sorrow, of contradiction and persecution; "he was afflicted," as never man was, "from his "youth up," from the hour of his birth, when, thrust out from the society of men, he made his bed in the stable at Bethlehem; he was "ready to die," a victim destined and prepared for that death which, by anticipation, he tasted of through life; he saw the flaming sword of God's "fierce wrath" waiting to "cut him off" from the land of the living; the "terrors" of the Almighty set themselves in array against him, threatening, like the mountainous waves of a tempestuous sea, to overwhelm his amazed soul. Let not the church be offended or despond, but rather let her rejoice in her sufferings, by which, through every period of her existence, from youth to age, she "filleth up that which is behind of the "afflictions of Christ," who suffers and will be glorified IN his people, as he hath already suffered and been glorified FOR them. See Col. i. 24.

* Dominus ipse de se, Psal. lxxxviii. 16., "Fero terrores "tuos; animi linquor." Loquitur de extremis suis angoribus et doloribus. VITRINGA in Jesai. ii. 667.

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18. *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*

It is mentioned again, as a most affecting circumstance of Christ's passion, that he was entirely forsaken, and left all alone, in that dreadful day. The bitter cup was presented filled to the brim, and he drank it off to the dregs. No man could share in those sufferings by which all other men were to be redeemed. His "lovers and friends," his disciples and acquaintance, "were put far from him;" they all "forsook him, and fled," to hide themselves from the fury of the Jews, "in darkness," in dark, i. e. secret places. Thus it is written in the Psalms, and thus in the Gospels it is recorded to have happened. Oftentimes, O blessed Jesu, do we forsake thee; but do not thou forsake us, or take thy holy Spirit from us.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXIX.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is appointed by the church to be read on Christmas-day. It celebrates, ver. 1—4. the mercies of God in Christ, promised to David; 5—13. the almighty power of Jehovah, manifested in his works and dispensations; 14. his justice, mercy, and truth; 15—18. the happiness and security of his people; 19—37. his covenant made

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with David, as the representative of Messiah, who should come of his seed; 38—45. the church lamenteth her distressful state, at the time when this Psalm was penned*; 46—51. she prayeth for the accomplishment of the promise; and, in the mean time, 52. blesseth Jehovah.

1. *I will sing of the mercies of the* LORD *for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*

The "mercies of Jehovah" have ever employed the voices of believers to celebrate them. These mercies were promises to the human race, in their great representative and surety, before the world began; 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. i. 2. they were prefigured by ancient dispensations; and, in part, fulfilled, at the incarnation of Christ. The "faithfulness" of God, in so fulfilling them, is now "made known," by the holy services of the Christian church, "to all "generations."

2. *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.*

Whatever be at any time the state of the church on earth, she knoweth that the foundation of God standeth sure; that the sacred edifice, raised thereon,

* Sedeciâ capto, domo David e solio deturbatâ, promissiones Dei irritas videri propheta queritur, necdum adesse Christum, BOSSUET.—Dr. Kennicott imagines it to have been composed by Isaiah, as a solemn and public address to God, at the time when Rezin and Pekah were advancing against Jerusalem.

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will be incorruptible and eternal as "heaven" itself, where only mercy and truth are to have their perfect work, in the everlasting felicity of the redeemed. Of this felicity, which is to be the consummation of God's promises, and our hopes, we behold some faint resemblance, as often as we view the stability, the beauty, and the glory of the visible material "heavens."

3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant: 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.

The two former verses set forth a profession of faith in God's mercy: these two assign the ground of such faith; namely, the covenant which God is here introduced as declaring that he had made with David, and which he did make with him by the prophet Nathan: 2 Sam. vii. 12, &c. The covenant relates to David's "seed," and to the "establishment of his "throne" in that seed; literally, in Solomon for a time; spiritually, in Christ for ever: "When thy "days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with "thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which "shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish "his kingdom. He shall build an house for my "name, and I will establish the throne of his king-"dom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be "my son." These last words are cited by the apostle, Heb. i. 5. as spoken of Christ, to evince his superiority over the angels. Yet, that the whole passage does, in the letter, relate to Solomon, can admit of no doubt, he being the "seed" and immediate

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successor of David, and the person appointed to "build an house for God's name." Here then we have an incontestable proof, that the covenant with David had Messiah for its object; that Solomon was a figure of him; and that the Scripture hath sometimes a double sense *. It is moreover to be observed, that the covenants made with Abraham, David, &c. all had their original and foundation in the covenant made with MESSIAH, who was the true Father of the faithful, the Beloved and Chosen of God; the great Prophet, Priest, and King; the only person qualified to be a Sponsor, and to engage in a covenant with the Father for mankind. His sufferings were the price of our redemption: and because he suffered in the flesh, as "the Son of "David," therefore is he "established for ever, "and his throne built up to all generations." Remarkable are the words of the angel to Mary: "The "Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his "father David; and he shall reign over the house of "Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be "no end." Luke i. 32.

5. *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O* LORD; *thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints:* or, *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O* LORD; *and the saints thy faithfulness in the congregation.*

Did not "the heavens praise the wonders of "Jehovah," when a choir of angels descended from above, to sing an anthem, at the birth of Christ?

* "Disposui testamentum: percussi fœdus cum electo meo: id est, Davide et Christo. BOSSUET.

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And how must the celestial courts have resounded with the hallelujahs of those blessed spirits, when they again received their King, returning in triumph from the conquest of his enemies? Nor do "the "saints" omit to celebrate God's "faithfulness in "the congregation" upon earth, while "with angels "and archangels, and all the company of heaven, "they laud and magnify his glorious name, evermore "praising him, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord "God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy "glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high."

6. *For who in the heaven can be compared unto the* LORD? who *among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the* LORD? 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all* them that are *about him.* 8. *O* LORD *God of hosts,* who *is a strong* LORD *like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?* or, *and thy faithfulness is round about thee.*

These verses proclaim that right and title which Jehovah hath to the praises of all his creatures in "heaven and earth." No one of them, however excellent and glorious, however deified and adored by fond and foolish man, can enter the lists, and contest the superiority with its Maker. High over all is the throne of God: before him "angels" veil their faces, "saints" prostrate themselves with lowest reverence, and created nature trembles at his word: his "power" is almighty, and derived from none; and with "truth" he is on all sides invested as with a garment: the former enables him, the latter (if we may so express it) binds him, to perform those gracious

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promises, which mercy prompted him to make, concerning our eternal redemption.

9. *Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*

The extent of the ocean, the multitude of its waves, and their fury when excited by a storm, render it, in that state, the most tremendous object in nature; nor doth any thing, which man beholds, give him so just an idea of human impotence, and of that divine power which can excite and calm so boisterous an element at pleasure. God himself therefore frequently appeals to this instance of his omnipotence, see Job xxxviii. 11. Jer. v. 22. an attribute of which our Lord showed himself to have been possessed, when, being with his disciples in the ship, he arose and rebuked a tempestuous wind and a raging sea, and there was instantly a calm. In all our troubles and temptations, be thou, blessed Jesu, with us, and then they shall never finally overwhelm us.

10. *Thou hast broken Rahab*, i. e. Egypt, *in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.*

The destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians is here mentioned as another instance of God's mighty power. And it is probable, that the foregoing verse was intended to allude more particularly to that miraculous exertion of God's sovereignty over the waters, the division of the Red Sea, which happened at the same time; as these two events are generally spoken of together. Thus Isaiah: "Art thou not it "that hath cut Rahab," i. e. Egypt, "and wounded

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"the dragon," i. e. Pharaoh? "Art thou not it which "hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, "that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the "ransomed to pass over?" li. 9. The same power which effected all this. hath since, in Christ Jesus, overcome the world, destroyed the works of the devil, and ransomed mankind from the depths of the grave.

11. *The* heavens *are thine, the earth also* is *thine:* as for *the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.* 12. *The north and the south, thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.*

The "heavens," and all the glorious bodies there ranged in beautiful order; the "earth," with its rich furniture, and the unnumbered tribes of its inhabitants, through its whole extent, from "north to "south," and from east to west; all these are so many evidences of that wisdom and power which at the beginning contrived and formed them; all, in their respective ways, declare the glory, and speak the praises of their great Creator; but chiefly the holy land, and the fruitful hills which adorned it. "Tabor" in one part, and "Hermon" in another, formerly seemed, as it were, to "rejoice" and sing, for the abundant favours showered down upon them by the God of Israel, who hath since caused all nations no less to exult and triumph in his saving NAME.

13. *Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand,* and *high is thy right hand.*

The Psalmist, having produced and meditated on

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some eminent instances of divine power, draws this general conclusion from the premises. Towards the Christian church "the arm of Jehovah" hath been revealed in a still more extraordinary manner. She reflecteth on the wonders wrought by Jesus; a conquest over more formidable enemies than Pharaoh and his Egyptians; a redemption from more cruel bondage; salvation from sin and death; a new creation, new heavens, and new earth, a new Jerusalem, and a spiritual Sion. With additional conviction may she therefore exclaim, "Thou hast a mighty arm; "strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand!"

14. *Justice and judgement* are *the habitation*, Heb. *the establishment, of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

Although the power of God be infinite, yet is it never exerted, but under the direction of his other attributes. When he goeth, as a judge, to his tribunal, "mercy and truth go before his face;" they are represented as preceding him, to give notice of his advent, and to prepare his way. "All the ways," or dispensations "of the Lord," as it is elsewhere observed, "are mercy and truth;" Ps. xxv. 10. they are the substance of all his revelations, which either promise salvation, or relate the performance of such promises. By these is man warned and prepared for "judgement;" which is to be the last and finishing scene. And when the great Judge of all the earth shall from his throne pronounce the irreversible sentence, not a creature then present shall be able to accuse that sentence of injustice. After this model should the thrones of princes, and the tribunals of

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earthly magistrates, be constituted in "justice and "judgement," adorned with "mercy and truth."

15. *Blessed* is *the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O* LORD, *in the light of thy countenance.*

Next to the praises of Jehovah, is declared the happiness of those who have him for their God; who "know the joyful sound, or sound of the trumpet," by which the festivals of the Jewish church were proclaimed, and the people were called together to the offices of devotion; who enjoy the "light" of truth, and through grace are enabled to "walk" therein. These blessings are now become our own: the evangelical trumpet hath sounded through the once Heathen world; the Sun of righteousness hath risen upon all nations. Let us attend to the "joyful sound;" let us "walk" in the glorious "light."

16. *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.* 17. *For thou* art *the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.* 18. *For the* LORD is *our defence; and the Holy One of Israel* is *our King.*

It is the duty of Christians, as it was that of Israelites, to ascribe all their strength, their success, and their glory, whether in matters temporal or spiritual, to Jehovah alone. Having heard the sound, and experienced the illuminating and reviving influences of the Gospel, in the name and in the salvation of God we rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness only we trust to be exalted to heaven: to him we attribute the glory of that strength, with

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which, in time of temptation, we may find ourselves happily endued; and in his favour, or grace, our horn, or the efforts of our power, shall be exalted, and crowned with victory; our defence in all dangers is from Jehovah, who was ever the shield of his ancient people; and the Holy One of Israel is our Redeemer, and our King.

19. *Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid,* or, *placed, help upon,* or, *in,* one that is *mighty; I have exalted* one *chosen out of the people.*

The covenant made with David was mentioned in general terms above, at verses 4, 5. But a more particular account is now given of God's dispensations relative to the son of Jesse, and his posterity. We are presented with the substance of the revelation made upon this subject, "in vision," to one of the prophets, perhaps Samuel, or Nathan, here styled an "holy one," or religious person, one favoured and accepted by God, who is introduced as manifesting to this his prophet the divine counsels concerning David: "I have placed help upon, or in "one, who shall become an eminent and mighty Sa-"viour of Israel; from among all the people I have "chosen, and determined to exalt him, for that pur-"pose, to the throne." Thus was Messiah foretold, in prophetical visions and revelations, as the person designed to be the mighty Redeemer of his church; thus, in the fulness of time, was he chosen from among all the children of men, and exalted, through sufferings, to an eternal throne.

20. *I have found David my servant; with my*

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holy oil have I anointed him: 21. *With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthem him.*

David was the servant of God; he was, by the prophet Samuel, anointed with oil; he was strengthened and established in his kingdom, by the hand and arm of Jehovah. But never let Christians fail, in this eminently figurative character, to contemplate that true DAVID (for so HE is called, Ezek. xxxiv. 23. xxxvii. 25.) the BELOVED Son of God; "the "servant and elect of Jehovah, in whom his soul "delighted, and on whom he put his Spirit;" Isa. xlii. 1. whom he "anointed with his holy oil, with the oil "of gladness, with the Holy Ghost and with power;" Ps. xlv. 7. Acts x. 38. whom he strengthened, and established in his spiritual kingdom, with his hand and arm, and the might of his omnipotence.

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon,* or, *deceive, him: nor the son of wickedness afflict,* or, *subdue, him.* 23. *And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.* 24. *But my faithfulness and my mercy* shall be *with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.*

These promises were fulfilled to David, when God delivered him out of the hand of Saul, and of all his other adversaries. See 2 Sam. xxii. 1. And in what a full, perfect, and divine sense, were they verified to Christ! That subtle enemy, "which deceiveth the "whole world," was not able to deceive him; neither the sons nor the father of wickedness could overthrow and subdue him: all opposition fell before him, and they who hated him suffered unparalleled deso-

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lation; the promised faithfulness and mercy of Jehovah were ever with him, and his kingdom was exalted with glory and honour.

25. *I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*

The dominions of David and his son Solomon extended from the Mediterranean "sea" to the "rivers" Euphrates, &c.: the empire of Christ is universal over Jews and Gentiles, throughout all the earth. See Ps. lxxii. 8, &c.

26. *He shall cry unto me, Thou* art *my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.* 27. *Also I will make him* my *first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*

All this, if in some respects true of David, is much more emphatically so of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Son of God" is one of his distinguished titles; of "the Father" he continually spoke, and to the Father he addressed his prayers and cries, in the days of his flesh; as man he was raised and exalted by the power and glory of the Divinity; he was "the "first born of every creature, the first begotten from "the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Col. i. 15. Rev. i. 5. Make us, blessed Lord, the sons of God, and teach us to cry, Abba, Father; give us victory and dominion over sin and death, that we may live and reign with thee for ever.

28. *My mercy will I keep for,* or, *to, him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.* 29. *His seed also will I make* to endure *for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*

God kept his mercy and covenant with David, by

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preserving the line of his posterity, until his great antitype, Messiah, the subject of all the promises, came, by whom the kingdom was established for ever, being changed into a spiritual one, which is to be transferred from earth to heaven, and rendered coeval with those eternal mansions of the blessed.

30. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements;* 31. *If they break,* or, *profane, my statutes, and keep not my commandments;* 32. *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* 33. *Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* 34. *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

The posterity of David were to enjoy God's favour, or be deprived of it, as they proved obedient or disobedient to his "law;" as they executed or perverted its civil "judgements;" as they observed or neglected its ceremonial "statutes," or religious institutions; as they kept or broke its "command-"ments," or moral precepts. When they became rebellious, idolatrous, and profligate, the rod was lifted up, and due chastisement inflicted, sometimes by the immediate hand of Heaven, sometimes by the instrumentality of their heathen adversaries; famine and pestilence, war and captivity, were at different times employed to reclaim backsliding Israel. But still, the "covenant" of God in Christ stood sure; the Jewish nation was preserved, through all changes and revolutions, "until the Seed came to whom the "promise was made;" nor was Jerusalem destroyed,

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before the new and spiritual kingdom of Messiah was set up in the earth. Christian communities, and the individuals that compose them, are in like manner corrected and punished for their offences. "Nevertheless, God's loving kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." So—"I am with you always," says the Redeemer, "even to the end of the world; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against my church:" Matt. xxviii. 20. xvi. 18. Nor shall the world be destroyed, until Christ come again, and his glorious kingdom be ready to appear.

35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* 36. *His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.* 37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon, and* as *a faithful witness in heaven.*

The promise, covenant, and oath of God, which he declareth shall never fail, are here repeated. They relate to Christ, that "Seed," or "Son of David," who "endureth for ever." His throne is resplendent as the "sun," and shall continue, after that luminary is extinguished: his church is permanent as the "moon," though, like her, subject to vicissitudes, and liable, for a time, to be obscured by eclipses, during her present state upon earth. And while the rainbow shall be seen in the clouds, man has "a faithful witness in heaven" of the immutable truth of God's word, and the infallible accomplishment of what he promises. "Look upon the rainbow," saith

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the wise son of Sirach, "and praise him who made "it: very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof: "it compasseth the heaven about with a glorious "circle, and the hands of the most High have "bended it:" Ecclus. xliii. 11. But let us not forget likewise, when we look upon the rainbow, to praise him who made it to be a sign and sacred symbol of mercy; in which capacity we behold it, to our great and endless comfort, compassing the throne of Christ with a gracious, as well as glorious, circle. "There was a RAINBOW round about the throne." Rev. iv. 3. Ezek. i. 28.

38. *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.* 39. *Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown,* by casting it *to the ground.*

In the former part of our Psalm, we have seen what the divine promises were, which had been made to the house of David. By the latter part, upon which we are entering, it appears, that the Psalm was written at a time, when the church of Israel was in such a manner oppressed and reduced by her enemies that her members began almost to despair of those promises receiving their accomplishment. God seemed to have "cast off" and "abhorred" his "anointed" and "servant," that is, David, or rather the prince of his family who was upon the throne when this captivity and desolation happened; the "covenant" seemed to be overturned and "made "void," when the "crown" of Israel was defiled in the dust.

40. *Thou hast broken down all his hedges, thou*

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hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. *All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.* 42. *Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.* 43. *Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.* 44. *Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.* 45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened; thou hast covered him with shame.*

The manifold calamities of Sion are in these verses enumerated,—the demolition of fences and fortifications; the cruel ravages consequentthere upon; the shame of defeats; the reproaches and insults of victorious adversaries; the dishonours of violent and untimely death. In days like these here described, when the church and the king are permitted to fall into the hands of those who hate them, and to drink thus deeply of the cup of affliction, distrust and despondency are apt to seize upon the minds of men. Nay, when the faithful few beheld the true "Son of "David," and "Anointed" of Jehovah, in the day of his sufferings; when they saw him, without help or defence, "spoiled and reproached by his neigh- "bours:" when they viewed "the right hand of his "adversaries set up," and all his "enemies rejoicing" over him; his "glory made to cease," and his "crown profaned in the dust; the days of his youth "shortened," and himself delivered over to a "shameful" as well as painful death; they then began to think "the covenant made void," and the promises at an end. "We trusted," said they,

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"that it had been he who should have redeemed "Israel!" Luke xxiv. 21. And although Christ be long since risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, yet the prevalence of iniquity, and the oppression of the church, have been, and in the last days will be such, as to put the faith and hope of his servants to a sore trial, while they wait for his second, as the ancient Jews did for his first advent.

46. *How long*, LORD? *Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?* 47. *Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Or, as Ainsworth translates the verse, *Remember how transitory I am, unto what vanity thou hast created all the sons of Adam.* 48. *What man* is he that *liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul*, or, *animal frame, from the hand of the grave?* 49. LORD, *where* are *thy former loving kindnesses*, which *thou swarest unto David in thy truth.*

This is the humble and dutiful expostulation of the church with God in all her distresses upon the earth. By asking, "How long, LORD? wilt thou "be angry for ever?" she tacitly pleadeth his promise not to be so: she urgeth the shortness of man's life here below, the universality of the fatal sentence, the impossibility of avoiding death, and, if nothing farther was to happen, the frustration of the divine counsels concerning man. From thence she entreateth God to remember the "loving kindnesses" once promised by him with an oath to David, as related in the former part of the Psalm. These "loving "kindnesses" are called, in Isaiah lv. 3. "the sure

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"mercies of David;" which "sure mercies of David" are affirmed by St. Paul, Acts xiii. 34. to have been then confirmed on Israel, when, in the person of Jesus, God raised our nature from the grave. To a resurrection, therefore, believers have ever aspired; thither have they directed their wishes, and on that event have they fixed their hopes, as the end of temporal sorrows, and the beginning of eternal joys.

50. *Remember*, LORD, *the reproach of thy servants;* how *I do bear in my bosom* the reproach of *all the mighty people;* 51. *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O* LORD; *wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*

The last argument urged by the church, in her expostulation with God for a speedy redemption, is, the continual reproach to which she was subject, on account of the promise being delayed. The "mighty people," or Heathen nations, who held her in captivity, and were witnesses of her wretched and forlorn estate, ridiculed her pretensions to perpetuity of empire in the house of David; they blasphemed the God, who was said to have made such promises; and "reproached the footsteps," or mocked at the tardy advent of his Messiah *, who was to establish in Israel his everlasting throne. All these cruel taunts and insults she was obliged to "bear in her bosom,"

* "Exprobraverunt vestigia Christi tui:" tarditatem vestigiorum Christi tui. Chald.—Irridebant nos quòd non adveniret expectatus ille Liberator, sive Cyrus, sive potius Christus de semine Davidis, regno ejus instaurando, et in æternum firmando. BOSSUET.

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and there to suppress them in silence, having nothing to answer in the day of her calamity and seeming destitution. St. Peter gives us a like account of the state of the Christian church in the latter days; he exhorts us to be "mindful of the words which were "spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the "commandments of the apostles of the Lord and "Saviour, because there shall come in the last days "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and say-"ing, Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4.

52. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *for evermore. Amen and Amen.*

But whatever be at any time our distress, either as a community or as individuals, still are we to believe, still to hope, still to bless and praise Jehovah, whose word is true, whose works are faithful, whose chastisements are mercies, and all whose promises are, in Christ Jesus, yea, and amen, for evermore.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XC.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is called, in its title, "A prayer of "Moses, the man of God." By him it is imagined to have been composed when God shortened the days of the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness. See Numb. xiv. It is, however, a Psalm

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of general use, and is made, by the church, a part of her funeral service. It containeth, 1, 2. an address to the eternal and unchangeable God, the Saviour and Preserver of his people; 3—10. a most affecting description of man's mortal and transitory state on earth since the fall; 11. a complaint, that few meditate in such a manner upon death, as to prepare themselves for it; 12. a prayer for grace so to do; 13—17. and for the mercies of redemption.

1. LORD, *thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.* 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou* art *God.*

The Psalmist, about to describe man's fleeting and transitory state, first directs us to contemplate the unchangeable nature and attributes of God, who hath always been a "dwelling place," or place of defence and refuge, affording protection and comfort to his people in the world, as he promised to be before the world began, and will, in a more glorious manner, continue to be after its dissolution. See, for a parallel, Ps. cii. 25, &c. with St. Paul's application, Heb. i. 10.

3. *Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*

Death was the penalty inflicted on man for sin. The latter part of the verse alludes to the fatal sentence, Gen. iii. 19. "Dust thou art, and unto dust

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"shalt thou return." How apt are we to forget both our original and our end!

4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but *as yesterday when it is past, and* as *a watch in the night.*

The connexion between the verse preceding and the verse now before us, seems to be this. God sentenced man to death. It is true, the execution of the sentence was at first deferred, and the term of human life suffered to extend to near a thousand years. But what was even that, what is any period of time, or time itself, if compared with the duration of the Eternal? All time is equal, when it is past; a thousand years, when gone, are forgotten as yesterday; and the longest life of man, to a person who looks back upon it, may appear only as three hours, or one quarter of the night.

5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are *like grass* which *groweth up; or, as grass* that *changeth.* 6. *In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

The shortness of life, and the suddenness of our departure hence, are illustrated by three similitudes. The first is that of a "flood," or torrent pouring unexpectedly and impetuously from the mountains and sweeping all before it in an instant. The second is that of "sleep," from which when a man awaketh he thinketh the time passed in it to have been nothing. In the third similitude, man is compared to the "grass" of the field. In the morning of youth fair and beautiful, he groweth up and flourisheth;

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in the evening of old age (and how often before that evening!) he is cut down by the stroke of death; all his juices, to the circulation of which he stood indebted for life, health, and strength, are dried up; he withereth, and turneth again to his earth. "Surely "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is "as the flower of the field!" Isa. xl. 6. Of this truth, the word of God, the voice of nature, and daily experience, join to assure us: yet who ordereth his life and conversation as if he believed it?

7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

The generations of men are troubled and consumed by divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death, through the displeasure of God; his displeasure is occasioned by their sins, all of which he seeth and punisheth. If Moses wrote this Psalm, the provocations and chastisements of Israel are here alluded to. But the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, is the case of Christians in the world; and the same thing is true both in them and in us.

9. *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale* that is told.

Life is compared to a "tale" that is told and forgotten; to a "word" which is but air, or breath, and vanisheth into nothing, as soon as spoken; or perhaps, as the original generally signifies, to a "meditation, a thought," which is of a nature still more fleeting and transient.

10. *The days of our years are threescore years*

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and ten, and if by reason of strength, they be *four-score years, yet* is *their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

This again might be primarily spoken by Moses, concerning Israel. The generation of those who came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards, fell within the space of forty years, in the wilderness; Numb. xiv. 29.; and they who lived longest experienced only labour and sorrow, until they were cut off, like grass, and, by the breath of God's displeasure, blown away from the face of the earth. Like the Israelites, we have been brought out of Egypt, and sojourn in the wilderness; like them we murmur, and offend God our Saviour; like them we fall and perish. To the age of seventy years, few of us can hope to attain; labour and sorrow are our portion in the world; we are mowed down, as this year's grass of the field; we fly away, and are no more seen in the land of the living.

11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear,* so is *thy wrath.*

Houbigant renders the verse thus: "Quis novit "vim iræ tuæ; et, prout terribilis es, furorem "tuum?"—"Who knoweth" or considereth, "the "power of thine anger; and thy wrath, in propor-"tion as thou art terrible?" that is, in other words, Notwithstanding all the manifestations of God's indignation against sin, which introduced death and every other calamity among men, who is there that knoweth, who that duly considereth and layeth to heart the almighty power of that indignation; who that is induced, by beholding the mortality of his

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neighbours, to prepare himself for his own departure hence? Such holy consideration is the gift of God, from whom the Psalmist, in the next verse, directeth us to request it.

12. *So teach* us *to number our days, that we may apply* our *hearts unto wisdom.*

He who "numbereth his days," or taketh a right account of the shortness of this present life, compared with the unnumbered ages of that eternity which is future, will soon become a proficient in the school of true wisdom. He will learn to give the preference where it is due; to do good, and suffer evil, upon earth, expecting the reward of both in heaven. Make us wise, blessed Lord, but wise unto salvation.

13. *Return, O* LORD, *how long? and let it repent thee concerning,* or, *be propitiated towards, thy servants.*

During the reign of death over poor mankind, God is represented as absent; he is therefore by the faithful entreated to "return," and to satisfy their longing desires after salvation; to hasten the day when Messiah should make a "propitiation" for sin, when he should redeem his servants from death, and ransom them from the power of the grave. The Christian, who knoweth that his Lord is risen indeed, looks forward to the resurrection of the just, when death shall be finally swallowed up in victory.

14. *O satisfy us early,* or, *in the morning, with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* 15. *Make us glad according to the days*

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wherein *thou hast afflicted us*, and *the years* wherein *we have seen evil.*

The church prayeth for the dawning of that glorious morning, when every cloud shall vanish at the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and night and darkness shall be no more. Then only shall we be "satisfied, or saturated, with the mercy" of Jehovah; then only shall we "rejoice and be glad all our "days." The time of our pilgrimage upon earth is a time of sorrow; we grieve for our departed friends and our surviving friends must soon grieve for us; these are "the days wherein God afflicteth us, these "the years wherein we see evil:" but he will hereafter "make us glad according to them;" in proportion to our sufferings, if rightly we bear those sufferings, will be our reward; nay, "these light "afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for "us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of "glory." Then shall our joy be increased, and receive an additional relish from the remembrance of our former sorrow; then shall we bless the days and the years which exercised our faith, and perfected our patience; and then shall we bless God, who chastised us for a season, that he might save us for ever.

16. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.* 17. *And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*

The redemption of man is that "work" of God

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whereby his "glory" is manifested to all generations, and which all generations do therefore long to behold accomplished. For this purpose the faithful beseech God to let his "beauty," his splendour, the light of his countenance, his grace and favour, be upon them: to "establish the work of their hands," to bless, prosper, and perfect them in their Christian course and warfare; until, through him, they shall be enabled to subdue sin, and triumph over death.

PSALM XCI.

ARGUMENT.

The Prophet, 1—10. declareth the security of the righteous man under the care and protection of Heaven, in times of danger, when, 11, 12. a guard of angels is set about him. 13. His final victory over the enemies of his salvation is foretold; and 14—16. God himself is introduced, promising him deliverance, exaltation, glory, and immortality. This Psalm is addressed, primarily, to Messiah. That it related to him, Jews and Christians are agreed; and the devil, Matt. iv. 6. cited two verses from it, as universally known and allowed to have been spoken of him.

1. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* 2. *I will say of the Lord,* He is *my refuge*

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and my fortress : my God; in him will I trust. 3. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,* and *from the noisome pestilence.*

In these verses, as they now stand, there is much obscurity and confusion. Bishop Lowth, in his xxvith Lecture, seemeth to have given their true construction : " He who dwelleth in the secret place " of the Most High; who abideth under the shadow " of the Almighty; who saith of the Lord, He is my " refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I will " trust;"—leaving the sentence thus imperfect, the Psalmist maketh a beautiful apostrophe to that person whom he has been describing—" Surely he shall " deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and " from the noisome pestilence." The description is eminently applicable to the man Christ Jesus *. He is represented as dwelling, like the ark in the Holy of holies, under the immediate " shadow" and protection of the Almighty, who was his " refuge and " fortress" against the open attacks of his enemies; his preserver from the " snares" of the devil, and from the universal contagion of sin, that spiritual " pestilence." In all dangers, whether spiritual or corporeal, the members of Christ's mystical body may reflect with comfort, that they are under the same Almighty protector.

4. *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth* shall be thy *shield and buckler.*

* Ode Davidica insignis xci. agit directe et primo loco de tegmine et defensione quam Deus Christo Jesu Doctori et apostolis ipsius præstaret. VITRINGA, Comment. in Jesai. ii. 565.

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The security afforded by a superintending Providence, to those who trust therein, is here, with the utmost beauty and elegance, compared to that shelter, which the young of birds are always sure to find under the "wings" of their dam, when fear causeth them to fly thither for refuge: see Deut. xxxii. 11. Matt. xxiii. 37. The "truth" of God's word, wherein he promiseth to be our defence, is, to a believer, his "shield and buckler," in the day of battle and war.

5. *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;* nor *for the arrow* that *flieth by day:* 6. Nor *for the pestilence* that *walketh in darkness:* nor *for the destruction* that *wasteth at noon-day.*

How much man standeth in need of the above-mentioned protection of Heaven, appeareth from a survey of the dangers, to which he is continually exposed. Various are the terrors of the night; manifold the perils of the day! from diseases whose infection maketh its progress unobserved; from assaults, casualties, and accidents, which can neither be foreseen, nor guarded against. The soul hath likewise her enemies, ready to attack and surprise her at all hours. Avarice and ambition are abroad watching for her in the day; while concupiscence, like a pestilence, "walketh in darkness." In adversity she is disturbed by terrors; in prosperity, still more endangered by pleasures. But Jesus Christ has overcome the world, to prevent us from being overcome by it.

7. *A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thou-*

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sand at thy right hand: but *it shall not come nigh thee.*

This promise has oftentimes, in a wonderful manner, been verified to those faithful servants of God, whom the pestilence itself hath not deterred from doing the duties of their station. The bishop and some of the intendants of Marseilles, who continued to perform their respective offices, during the whole time of the plague there in 1720, are signal and well-known instances. Sin is a pestilence, the contagion of which no son of Adam ever escaped but the blessed Jesus. He stood alone untouched by its venom; thousands and ten thousands, all the myriads of mankind, fell around him; "but it did not "come nigh Him." Heal us of this our distemper, O thou Physician of souls, and let it not prove our everlasting destruction; "stand," like thy representative of old, "between the dead and the living, and "let the plague be stayed:" Numb. xvi. 47, 48.

8. *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

The meaning is, that the righteous person all along spoken of, himself secure from the judgements of God, should in safety behold the destruction wrought by them upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners. This will be the case with the church, as well as her glorious head, at the last day.

9. *Because thou hast made the* LORD, which is *my refuge,* even *the Most High, thy habitation;*
10. *There shall no evil befal thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*

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The sentiment in these verses is evidently the same with that in verses 5, 6. namely, that God preserveth such as trust in him, after the pattern of the holy Jesus, from those evils, and from that perdition, which are reserved for the ungodly. Dr. Durell translates the 9th verse, in the way of apostrophe, literally thus—"Surely, thou, O Lord, art my re-"fuge; O Most High, thou hast fixed thine habi-"tation;" i. e. in Sion, to be the protector of his servant.

11. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* 12. *They shall bear thee up in* their *hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

This passage was cited by the devil, who tempted our Lord to cast himself from a pinnacle of the temple, upon presumption of the promise here made, that angels should guard and support him in all dangers. But Christ, in his answer, at once detecteth and exposeth the sophistry of the grand deceiver, by showing, that the promise belonged only to those who fell unavoidably into danger, in the course of duty; such might hope for the help and protection of Heaven; but that he who should wantonly and absurdly throw himself into peril, merely to try whether Providence would bring him out of it, must expect to perish for his pains. "Jesus saith unto him, "It is written again, Thou shalt not TEMPT the "Lord thy God." Matt. iv. 7.

13. *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.*

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The fury and the venom of our spiritual enemies are often in Scripture portrayed by the natural qualities of "lions and serpents." Messiah's complete victory over those enemies seemeth here to be predicted. Through grace he maketh us more than conquerors in our conflicts with the same adversaries. "The God of peace," saith St. Paul, "shall bruise "Satan under your feet shortly:" Rom. xvi. 20. And it is observable that, when the seventy disciples return to Christ with joy, saying, "Lord, even the "devils are subject unto us through thy name;" he answers in the metaphorical language of our Psalm: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on scor- "pions and serpents, and over all the power of the "enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the "SPIRITS are subject unto you," &c. Luke x. 17. Give us, O Lord, courage to resist the "lion's" rage, and wisdom to elude the wiles of the "ser- "pent."

14. *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.* 15. *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I* will be *with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour*, or, *glorify him.* 16. *With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.*

In the former part of our Psalm, the Prophet had spoken in his own person; here God himself is plainly introduced as the speaker. And, O how sweet, how delightful and comfortable, are his words, addressed eminently to his beloved Son Messiah; and

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in him to all of us, his adopted children, and the heirs of eternal life; to all who love God, and have "known his name!" To such are promised, an answer to their prayers; the presence of their heavenly Father with them; in the day of trouble, protection and deliverance; salvation, and honour, and glory, and immortality. All these promises have already been made good to our gracious Head and Representative. His prayers have been heard; his sufferings are over: he is risen and ascended; and behold, he liveth and reigneth for evermore. Swift fly the intermediate years, and rise that long-expected morning, when He who is gone "to prepare a place for "us, shall come again, and take us to himself, that "where he is we may be also!"

PSALM XCII.

ARGUMENT.

The title of this Psalm is, "A Psalm, or Song, for "the Sabbath Day." It teacheth, 1—5. the duty, time, and manner, of giving thanks for the works and dispensations of God. Thoughtless men are admonished, 6. to reflect upon the final issue of all these works and dispensations; namely, 7—9. the utter perdition of the ungodly, and, 10—14. the exaltation of the church in Christ Jesus, 15. to the praise and glory of God most high.

1. It is a *good thing to give thanks unto the* LORD, *and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most*

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High: 2. To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night: 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

"Thanksgiving" is the duty, and ought to be the delight, of a Christian. It is his duty, as being the least return he can make to his great Benefactor: it ought to be his delight, for it is that of angels, and will be that of every grateful heart, whether in heaven or in earth. The "mercy" of God in promising salvation, and his "faithfulness" in accomplishing it, are inexhaustible subjects for "morning and "evening" praises; every instrument should be strung, and every voice tuned, to celebrate them, until day and night come to an end. But more especially should this be done on the "sabbath "day;" which, when so employed, affords a lively resemblance of that eternal sabbath, to be hereafter kept by the redeemed, in the kingdom of God.

4. *For thou,* LORD, *hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*

A prospect of creation in the vernal season, fallen as it is, inspires the mind with a joy which no words can express. But how doth the regenerate soul exult and triumph, at beholding that "work" of God's "hand," whereby he hath created all things anew in Christ Jesus! If we can be pleased with such a world as this, where sin and death have fixed their habitation; shall we not much rather admire those other heavens, and that other earth, wherein dwell righteousness and life? What are we to think

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of the palace, since even the prison is not without its charms!

5. *O* LORD, *how great are thy works!* and *thy thoughts are very deep.* 6. *A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.*

Glorious are the works, profound the counsels, marvellous the dispensations of God, in nature, in providence, in grace. But all are lost to the man void of spiritual discernment; who, like his fellow "brutes," is bowed down to earth, and knoweth no pleasures but those of sense. Here he hath chosen his paradise, and set up his tabernacle: not considering that his tabernacle must shortly be taken down, and he must remove hence for ever.

7. *When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;* it is *that they shall be destroyed for ever.* 8. *But thou,* LORD, art most *high for evermore.*

It is not improbable, that these verses should be connected with that preceding, thus—"A brutish "man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand "this;" namely, that "When the wicked spring as "the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do "flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for "ever;" they are only nourishing themselves like senseless cattle in plentiful pastures, for the approaching day of slaughter. He who is ignorant of the final issue of things, who attendeth not to his eternal interest, he is, in Scripture language, "the "brutish man," and the "fool" who knoweth not the works, neither understandeth the designs of Heaven. When the "grass" hath attained to its most

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flourishing estate, and all the flowers of the field are in perfect beauty, then the mower entereth with his scythe. What a beautiful and instructive emblem is here held forth to us! what a forcible admonition to trust only in him, who, without "variableness or "shadow of turning," is "most high for evermore!"

9. *For, lo, thine enemies, O* LORD, *lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.* 10. *But my horn shalt thou exalt like* the horn of *an unicorn: I shall be,* or, *I am, anointed with fresh oil.*

The "workers of iniquity" are the enemies of "Jehovah," and will be "scattered" by the breath of his displeasure, as grass, after it is cut down, dried up, and withered, is driven away by the whirlwinds of heaven. "But my horn," saith the Psalmist (it is likely in the person of Messiah), "my horn," that is, the strength and power of my kingdom, "shalt thou exalt like the horn of the unicorn *," like the power of the strongest creatures, to which that of states and empires is often compared; "I "shall be," or, "I am, anointed with fresh oil;" I am appointed and consecrated king by the holy unction. Christians have "an unction from the Holy "One," by which they are enabled to subdue their spiritual enemies; they reign over their passions and affections; they are exalted in the Redeemer: they are "made unto their God kings and priests." 1 John ii. 20. Rev. v. 10.

11. *Mine eye also shall see* my desire *on mine*

* Heb. רְאֵמִים, an eastern animal of the "stag" or "deer" kind, remarkable for its height, strength, and fierceness.

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enemies: and *mine ears shall hear* my desire *of the wicked that rise up against me.*

The words, "my desire," are twice inserted by our translators. But would it not be better, if we were to supply the ellipsis in this manner, "Mine "eye shall behold the fall of mine enemies; and "mine ear shall hear the destruction of the wicked "that rise up against me?" The sense of the verse is plain. It is intended to express an assurance of faith, an humble confidence in the promises of God, that our efforts shall at length be crowned with victory over every thing which resisteth and opposeth itself; and that the day is coming, when we shall view all the enemies of our salvation dead at our feet.

12. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

The momentary prosperity of the wicked was compared above to the transient verdure of "grass." The durable felicity of the righteous is here likened to the lasting strength and beauty of "palms" and "cedars." But chiefly is the comparison applicable to that Just One, the King of Righteousness, and Tree of Life; eminent and upright; ever verdant and fragrant; under the greatest pressure and weight of sufferings, still ascending toward heaven; affording both fruit and protection; incorruptible and immortal. "I sat down," saith the church, "under "his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was "sweet to my taste." Song ii. 3.

13. *Those that be planted in the house of the* LORD, *shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

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Believers are styled by Isaiah, "Trees of righ-
"teousness, the planting of Jehovah:" ch. lxi. 3. They are planted by the living waters of comfort, "in the house of God;" where, under the means of grace, they "flourish" in hope of glory; "fenced "and enclosed by the discipline and orders of the "church, and by the consequent favour and pro-"tection of Heaven; their verdure is conspicuous, "and ever constant, whether in the summer of pro-"sperity, or the winter of adversity: their actions "and principles are ever upright and fair; yea, their "very leaf exhales a delightful perfume, by a holy "example and conversation; their affections and de-"sires are ever ascending towards the noblest and "most sublime objects, the things that are above, "the glorious things of heaven *."

14. *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing.*

Happy the man whose goodness is always progressive, and whose virtues increase with his years; who loseth not, in multiplicity of worldly cares or pleasures, the holy fervours of his first love, but goeth on burning and shining more and more, to the end of his days. The church, like her representative Sarah, is now "well stricken in years;" but we hope that, like her, she will "still bring forth fruit "in her old age;" we look for many more "chil-"dren of promise" to be born unto Christ, born from among the Jews and Gentiles.

* Essay on the Proper Lessons, by Mr. Wogan, vol. iii. p. 49.

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15. *To show that the* LORD *is upright:* he *is my rock, and* there *is no unrighteousness in him.*

The fruit brought forth in the church redounds to the glory of God, by whom the trees, in this his new paradise, were planted; it shows to all the world, that he is just and "upright" in his dealings; that he is true to his promises; immoveable, as a "rock," in his counsels; determined to punish the wicked, and to reward the good; so that when his proceedings shall come to be unfolded at the last day, it will appear to men and angels, that "there is no unrighteousness in him."

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCIII.

ARGUMENT.

The Jews acknowledge, that the kingdom of Messiah is prophesied of in this Psalm, and in all those which follow, to the hundredth. 1, 2. The church celebrates the majesty, power, and glory, of the eternal King; 3. describes the danger she is often in from persecutions, &c. but, 4. strengtheneth herself in God her Saviour, whose house, 5. ought to be, like himself, full of truth and holiness.

1. *The* LORD *reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the* LORD *is clothed with strength,* wherewith

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he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.

From the beginning, God, as Creator, was sovereign Lord of the universe. He was also formerly, in a more especial manner, King of Israel. But since that time, a new and spiritual kingdom hath been erected by Jesus Christ, as Redeemer, whom the church now celebrates, and whose praises she sings continually. Risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the Lord Jesus reigneth, and shall reign, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet:" 1 Cor. xv. 25. By the glorification of his human nature, he is "clothed with majesty: All power is "given unto him in heaven and in earth;" Matt. xxviii. 18. so that he is "girded with strength;" and through that strength, he hath "established" the new "world," that is to say, his church, that it "cannot be moved," or subverted, by all the powers of earth and hell.

2. *Thy throne* is *established of old; thou* art *from everlasting.*

Earthly thrones are temporary; they are set up, and cast down again, neither is any trust to be reposed in them. But the throne of Christ is eternal and unchangeable. Constituted before the foundation of the world, it is to endure when no traces of such a system having once existed shall any more be found.

3. *The floods have lifted up, O* LORD, *the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.* 4. *The* LORD *on high* is *mightier than the*

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noise of many waters, yea, than *the mighty waves of the sea*.

In the first of these verses, the church appears like a ship in a stormy sea, to which she is often compared. Persecutions and afflictions are those "floods," those "waves" of this troublesome world, which threaten every moment to overwhelm and sink her. With a fearful and desponding tone of voice, therefore, she crieth out, "The floods have lifted "up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; "the floods lift up their waves!" But immediately she strengtheneth and comforteth herself in the Lord her God: "The Lord on high is mightier than the "noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves "of the sea." He can say to sorrows and temptations, as he doth to the waters of the ocean, "Peace, "be still; hitherto shall ye come, but no farther:" and his word is endued with equal power in both cases.

5. *Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD, *for ever*.

God's "testimonies" are the promises made in Scripture to the church, that he will be with her, during the afflictions which befall her here below, and will, in time, deliver her out of all her troubles. These "testimonies are very sure;" these promises do not, they cannot, fail. "Holiness," therefore, which consisteth in obedience and patience, "be- "cometh," is the proper ornament, grace, and beauty of "his house," and of Christians, those living stones that compose it. Sacred and inviolable is the word of our King; sacred and inviolable should be the loyalty of his subjects.

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PSALM XCIV.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist, complaining of corrupt and troublous times, in the person of the church, 1—4. prayeth for the downfall of prosperous wickedness; 5, 6. he describeth the cruelty, and, 7—11. reproveth the atheistical folly of those who persecute God's people; 12, 13. he extolleth the blessedness of the persecuted, if they are endued with faith and patience, inasmuch as, 14, 15. the divine promise and their future reward are certain; he, therefore, 16—19. throweth himself wholly upon God, whose mercies never fail, who, 20, 21, cannot be on the side of iniquity, but, 22, 23. will preserve his saints, and destroy their enemies.

1. *O* LORD *God, to whom vengeance belongeth, O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.* 2. *Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud.*

The church, however unjustly oppressed and afflicted, remembereth that "vengeance belongeth" not to her, had she the power to inflict it; but "to "God" only, who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I "will repay:" Rom. xii. 19. To him, therefore, she maketh her supplication, that he would manifest his glory in her salvation; that he would ascend the

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tribunal, "as judge of the earth," try her cause, and avenge her of her insolent and cruel persecutors.

3. LORD, *how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?* 4. How long *shall they utter* and *speak hard things?* and *all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*

The "triumphs" of wickedness, the "hard "speeches," taunts, and scoffs of infidelity, against Christ, and all who belong to him, are a continual grief of heart to the faithful in the world, who desire nothing so much as to see the empire of sin at an end, and the kingdom of righteousness established. But for this great event they must wait with patience, until the time appointed by the Father, when the iniquities of the world, and the sufferings of the church, shall be full. "I saw under the altar," saith the well-beloved John, "the souls of them that "were slain for the word of God, and for the testi- "mony which they held. And they cried with a "loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and "true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on "them that dwell on the earth? And white robes "were given unto every one of them, and it was "said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little "season, until their fellow-servants also, and their "brethren, that should be killed, as they were, should "be fulfilled." Rev. vi. 9. &c.

5. *They break in pieces thy people, O* LORD, *and afflict thine heritage.* 6. *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*

Some instances of cruelty, exercised by the enemies against the "people and heritage" of God, are

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here specified. "Widows, strangers, and orphans," are destitute of the help and protection afforded by husbands, friends, and fathers. Christ is become an husband to the church, a father to her children, and the only friend to both in time of need. Else were we all in the state of strangers and orphans, exposed, with our widowed mother, to the unrelenting malice and fury of the great oppressor and murderer.

7. *Yet they say, The* LORD *shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard* it. 8. *Understand, ye brutish among the people: and* ye *fools, when will ye be wise?* 9. *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* 10. *He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge,* shall not he know? or, *he that instructeth the nations, shall not he rebuke; even he that teacheth man knowledge?*

The Psalmist informeth us, that men are encouraged in their injustice and villany, by a persuasion that God doth not behold or regard what they do to his people. The absurdity of such a conceit is shown from these considerations; that it is God who bestoweth on man the powers of seeing and hearing, and therefore that he himself must needs be possessed of those powers in the highest perfection; that it is God who hath instructed the world, by his revelations, in religious knowledge, and consequently, without all doubt, he cannot be ignorant of the use and abuse which men make of that his unspeakable gift.

11. *The* LORD *knoweth the thoughts of man, that they* are *vanity.*

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So far is God from being a stranger to the actions, that he is privy to the first "thoughts" of men, from whence those actions flow; he is acquainted with all their counsels against his church, and knoweth them to be as vain as the imagination that he is ignorant of them. The wicked can no more escape the hand, than they can elude the eye, of Heaven.

12. *Blessed* is *the man whom thou chastenest,* or, *instructest, O* LORD, *and teachest him out of thy law:* 13. *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*

Since, therefore, the schemes of the adversary are vain, and the counsel of Jehovah shall infallibly stand, happy is the man who, having learned, from the Scriptures of truth, the lessons of faith and patience, enjoys tranquillity of mind in time of trouble, while destruction is preparing for the impenitent. Then, when "the days of adversity" are over, shall pain and sorrow take a final leave of the righteous to go and dwell with the wicked, to eternal ages. The former shall enter into the rest and joy of their Lord; the latter, into the fire prepared originally for the devil and his angels.

14. *For the* LORD *will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.* 15. *But judgement shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it.*

The faith and patience of the saints are built upon the foundation of God's promise not to "cast off and "forsake," however he may chasten and correct, his "people and inheritance." At a fit time,

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"judgement shall return to righteousness," which it might seem to have forsaken: iniquitous oppressors shall meet with the punishment they have deserved, and the faithful shall experience the promised redemption. For thus Dr. Hammond renders and expounds the last clause of the two verses under consideration—"and after this," i. e. after "judgement" shall have "returned to righteousness, all the upright "in heart;" i. e. it shall be their time; they shall succeed and flourish. Such were those halcyon days enjoyed by the Jews, after the fall of Babylon, and their return to their own land; such those times of refreshment to the church Christian, when the Pagan persecutions were at an end, and the Roman empire became Christian. Far more transcendent is the felicity of a soul when it exchanges the miseries of the world for the delights of paradise, there to wait, with its sister spirits, until the bodies of saints shall pass from the dishonours of the grave to the glories of immortality.

16. *Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* or, *who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* 17. *Unless the* LORD had been *my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*

But in the mean season, while "evil-doers" are permitted to prosper, and "the workers of iniquity" carry on their designs, the Prophet asks, in the person of the church, who is there that will or can protect, defend, and deliver? The answer is, God only can do it: "Unless the Lord had been my "help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence," or, I had almost been in the state of death. How often

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have our spiritual enemies arisen against us, threatening to bring us into a state of eternal death, but the Lord Jesus was our help and our salvation!

18. *When I said my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O* LORD, *held me up.*

When the child of God, walking in the slippery paths of life, findeth himself falling into temptation, if he confesseth his inability to stand his ground, and crieth out, like Peter on the water, to his heavenly Father, "Lord, save me, I perish;" a merciful, gracious, and powerful hand will immediately be stretched out, to support his steps, and establish his goings.

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.*

The excellent Norris, in a masterly sermon on this verse, has given us the following elegant and affecting paraphrase of it:—"When my mind sallies "out into a multitude of thoughts, and those "thoughts make me sad and heavy, anxious and "solicitous, as presenting to my view my own "weakness and infirmity, and the universal vanity of "all those seeming props and stays, upon which my "deluded soul was apt to lean; the many great "calamities of life, and the much greater terrors of "death; the known miseries of the present state, "and the darkness and uncertainty of the future; "still urging me with fresh arguments of sorrow, "and opening new and new scenes of melancholy, "till my soul begins to faint and sink under the "burthen she has laid upon herself: when I am "thus thoughtful, and thus sorrowful, then it is, O

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" my God, that I feel the relief of thy divine re-
" freshments; I find myself supported and borne up
" by the strong tide of thy consolations, which raise
" my drooping head, strike a light into my soul,
" and make me not only dismiss, but even forget,
" that sorrow and melancholy, which my thought-
" fulness had brought upon me." Who that reads this will not thankfully take and follow the advice offered in another part of the same discourse? " Whenever, therefore, thoughts arise in thy heart,
" and troubles from those thoughts; when thy mind
" is dark and cloudy, and all the regions of the soul
" are overcast; then betake thyself to thy oratory,
" either to thy closet, or the church, and there en-
" tertain thy soul with the pleasures of religion, and
" the satisfaction of a clear conscience." See Norris's Practical Discourses, vol. iii. ser. 4.

20. *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?*

One consideration which affordeth comfort to the faithful under persecution and affliction, is this, that God can never be on the side of oppression and injustice, though, to answer wise and salutary purposes, he may, for a time, suffer them to have the dominion, and to establish inquity by law. A distinction there certainly must be between right and wrong; and the former must as certainly triumph at the last day.

21. *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.*

Righteousness and innocence are most atrocious

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crimes, in the eyes of wickedness and guilt. For these crimes Cain slew his brother Abel, the Jews crucified Christ, the Pagans tortured and murdered his disciples, and bad men in all ages have persecuted the good. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world "hate you." 1 John iii. 13.

22. *But the* LORD *is my defence: and my God* is *the rock of my refuge.* 23. *And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness;* yea, *the* LORD *our God shall cut them off.*

Jehovah is our "defence;" we fear not the fiery darts of the enemy; He is "the rock of our "refuge;" we bid defiance to the rage and malice of earth and hell. Armed with the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, we rise superior to every effort of diabolical malice and secular power; waiting, in patience and hope, for the coming of that day, when He who hateth unrighteousness, and with whom the throne of iniquity can have no fellowship, shall visit the wickedness of the wicked upon them; when the world of the ungodly shall share the fate of apostate Jerusalem, and the righteous shall be glorified with their Lord and Saviour.

NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XCV.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm hath been long used in the Christian church, as a proper introduction to her holy ser-

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vices. It containeth, 1, 2. an exhortation to praise Jehovah, 3. for his greatness, 4, 5. and for his works of creation; 6. men are invited to worship him as their Maker, and, 7. as their Preserver; 8—11. they are warned against tempting and provoking him, by the example of the Israelites in the wilderness. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews hath taught us to consider the Psalm as an address to believers under the Gospel.

1. *O come, let us sing unto the* LORD: *let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*

In this first verse, Christians now exhort and stir up each other, as the Jews did of old, to employ their voices in honour of Jehovah, to celebrate "the "rock of their salvation." Jesus, by redeeming us from our enemies, hath opened our lips, and our mouths ought, therefore, to show forth his praise. He is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land. "O come, then, let us "sing unto this our LORD; let us make a joyful "noise unto this rock of our salvation."

2. *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*

The "presence" of Jehovah dwelt formerly between the cherubim, in a tabernacle, or temple, made

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with hands, whither the Israelites were to resort, until God became manifest in the flesh. After that time, the divine presence left the synagogue, and removed into the Christian church; by her we are now invited "to come before that presence with "thanksgiving," and, while we "make a joyful noise," by chanting these divine "Psalms," to imitate, in some measure, "the heavenly choirs, who rest not," from their blessed employment of praising God, "day or night." Rev. iv. 8.

3. *For the* LORD *is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*

It is not without reason, that we are exhorted to "give thanks and praise unto our God and King; for he is worthy to receive glory and blessing:" Rev. v. 12. He is a God above all that are called by that name; above those deities, which were once worshipped by the ancient Heathen; above the world, which still continues to be an object of adoration among infatuated mortals. His throne is over all, and power and dominion are his.

4. *In his hand* are *the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills* is *his also.* 5. *The sea* is *his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry* land.

The treasures, which lie hid in the "deep places" of the earth beneath; the majestic pride and "strength "of the hills," which tower above, and lift up their heads to heaven; the unnumbered waves of the great and wide "sea," which roll in perpetual motion round the world; the rich and variegated produce of the "dry land," crowned with verdure and beauty;

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together with every thing that liveth in the waters, or on the earth; all are under the government of our God; by him were all things created; by him have all things been redeemed.

6. *O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the* LORD *our Maker.*

As in the beginning of the Psalm we were called upon to "praise" Jehovah, so here we are invited to humble ourselves before him in "prayer." From him we had our being; him, therefore, we are to supplicate for every other blessing, both in this life, and that which is to come. And since he made our bodies, as well as our souls, it is meet and right that they should bear their part in his service, and that internal worship should be accompanied and signified by that which is external.

7. *For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

An additional reason why we should both praise Jehovah, and pray to him, is the peculiar relation into which he hath been pleased to put himself by the covenant of grace; "he is our GOD;" we are the objects of his tender care and unspeakable love: we are his "people," and his "sheep;" his chosen flock, which he hath purchased with his blood, which he feeds with his word, and refreshes with his Spirit, in fair and pleasant pastures. From those pastures, O thou good Shepherd! suffer us not to stray; or, if we do stray, bring us speedily back again, by any means which thou, in thine infinite wisdom, shalt think fit. Wholesome is the discipline which drives us into the fold, and keeps us there.

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8. *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,* and *as* in *the day of temptation in the wilderness.* 9. *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.*

The first clause of these two verses may be joined to the preceding verse, thus, "He is our God, we "are the people of his pasture and the sheep of "his hand, if ye will hear his voice to-day;" that is, if ye will be his obedient people, he will continue to be your God. Or else the word אם, translated "if," may be rendered in the opative form, "O "that you would hear his voice to-day," saying unto you, "Harden not," &c. However this be, what follows to the end of the Psalm is undoubtedly spoken in the person of God himself, who may be considered as addressing us, in these latter days, by the Gospel of his Son; for so the apostle teaches us to apply the whole passage, Heb. iii. iv. The Israelites when they came out of Egypt, had a day of probation, and a promised rest to succeed it; but, by unbelief and disobedience, they to whom it was promised, that is, the generation of those who came out of Egypt, fell short of it, and died in the wilderness. The Gospel, in like manner, offers, both to Jew and Gentile, another day of probation in this world, and another promised rest to succeed it, which remaineth for the people of God, in heaven. All whom it concerns are, therefore, exhorted to beware lest they forfeit the second rest, as murmuring and rebellious Israel came short of the first. The verses now before us allude to what passed at the place called "Massah," and "Meribah," from

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the people there "tempting" and striving with their God, notwithstanding all the mighty works which he had wrought for them, before their eyes. Exod. xvii. 7.

10. *Forty years long was I grieved*, or, *disgusted, with* this *generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways.*

O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker "forty years!" O the patience and long suffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in! Sin begins in the "heart," by its desires "wandering" and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows inattention to the "ways" of God; to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.

11. *Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.*

Exclusion from Canaan was the punishment of Israelitish contumacy; exclusion from heaven is to be the punishment of disobedience among Christians. To take vengeance on those who reject the Gospel terms, is no less a part of the covenant and oath of God, than it is to save and glorify those who accept them. Yet men continue deliberately to commit those sins, which the Almighty standeth thus engaged to punish with destruction *! "Take heed," therefore,

* Sensus hujus loci ex Paulo sic concinnandus; nempe requiem a Deo Israëlitis esse promissam in terrâ Chananæâ: omnes tamen interim in deserto cecidisse hâc requie frustratos: quare

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"brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart "of unbelief, in departing from the living God. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called "To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the "deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers "of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence "steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day, if "ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as "in the provocation. For some, when they had "heard, did provoke; howbeit, not all that came "out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he "grieved forty years? Was it not with them that "had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? "And to whom sware he, that they should not enter "into his rest, but to them that believed not? So "we see that they could not enter in because of un-"belief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being "made us of entering into his rest, any of you "should seem to come short of it. For unto us "was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; "but the word preached did not profit them, not "being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. iii. 12, &c.

Spiritum Sanctum per Davidem ad novam requiem invitâsse; ad novum illud sabbatum ab ipso mundi exordio diei septimæ requie figuratum, novumque indixisse diem quo sub Christo, in Ecclesiâ, ac cœlesti patriâ quiesceremus, nisi essemus increduli: unde sic concludit Paulus: "Festinemus ingredi in "illam requiem." BOSSUET.

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PSALM XCVI.

ARGUMENT.

By common consent of Jews and Christians, we apply this Psalm to the times of Messiah. 1—4. Men are exhorted to sing his praises; to declare his salvation; 4, 5. to acknowledge his supremacy over the gods of the nations, with, 6. the glory and beauty of his sanctuary; 7—9. to give him the honour, the worship, and the obedience due unto him, and, 10. to publish the glad tidings of his kingdom being established: 11—13. the whole creation is called upon to rejoice at this great event. We find, by 1 Chron. xvi. that David delivered out this Psalm, to be sung on occasion of temporal blessings prefigurative of future spiritual ones.

1. *O sing unto the* LORD *a new song; sing unto the* LORD, *all the earth.*

Jehovah, our Redeemer, is the person whose praises are to be sung. They are to be sung in a "new" song; a song calculated to celebrate new mercies, prefigured by old ones wrought for Israel in former times; a song fit for the voices of renewed and regenerate men to sing in the new Jerusalem, in those new heavens and that new earth, which constitute the new creation, or kingdom of Jesus Christ. And as the mercies of God are universal, extending themselves not only to the Jews, but to all the

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nations of the earth, all the nations of the earth are therefore exhorted to bear a part in this new song; "Sing unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the "LORD, all the earth." Thus St. John, after reckoning up the 144,000, or full number of those who were sealed to salvation from among the tribes of Israel, proceeds to tell us, that he "beheld, and, lo, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their "hands." All these sung a new song, which none could learn but the redeemed; they "cried with a "loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which "sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." See Rev. v. vii. xiv.

2. *Sing unto the* LORD, *bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.*

Again are we excited to sing unto the Lord Jesus, and in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, to bless his saving NAME. The latter clause of the verse is very expressive in the original, בשרו "preach," or, "evangelize his salvation from day to day;" let it be the constant theme of all your discourses; publish it to the world in every possible way, by your words, and by your actions; and while God allows you breath and life, let one day transmit the glorious employment to another, until it be resumed and continued in heaven to all eternity.

3. *Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among all people.*

The "glory" of Messiah in his incarnation, his

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life, his death, resurrection, ascension, and kingdom, the "wonders" or miracles by him wrought upon the bodies and souls of men; these were the things "declared among the heathen," even "among all "people," by the apostles and their successors; these things are still declared, by the Scriptures read, and sermons preached, in the church, which was gathered originally from among the Gentiles.

4. *For the* LORD is *great, and greatly to be praised; he* is *to be feared above all gods.* 5. *For all the gods of the nations* are *idols*, or, *things of nought; but the* LORD *made the heavens.*

Christ is to be celebrated, his glory and wonders are to be declared, because he is, in every possible sense, "great;" great in dignity, in power, in mercy; and therefore "greatly to be praised" by every creature. The heavens and heavenly bodies, adored by the nations, were no gods, but the works of "his" hands, who had fixed his everlasting throne high above them all. At the publication of the Gospel, idolatry fell before it; and what is the world itself but one great idol, which is to fall and disappear in like manner?

6. *Honour and majesty* are *before him; strength and beauty* are *in his sanctuary.*

What are the splendour and magnificence of earthly courts, when compared with that glory and majesty, the unutterable brightness of which fills the court of the heavenly King? Some portion of this celestial light is communicated, through grace, to the Christian church, which is described by St. John, under images borrowed from the figurative sanctuary, and

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the earthly Jerusalem, as an edifice composed of gold and precious stones, illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb residing in the midst of it. See Rev. xxi.

7. *Give unto the* LORD, *O ye kindreds,* or, *families,* or, *tribes, of the people, give unto the* LORD *glory and strength.* 8. *Give unto the* LORD *the glory* due unto *his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.* 9. *O worship the* LORD *in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.*

In these three verses, the tribes of the spiritual Israel are enjoined to ascribe to their Redeemer all "glory and strength," as essentially inherent in him, and by him communicated to his people; to give him the entire "glory of his name," and of that "salvation" imported by it; to bring the "sacri-"fices" of the new law, and to assemble in the "courts" of his house; to worship him in that "beauty of holiness" which is constituted by the regular and solemn services of the church; to "fear" and obey him, as the subjects of a King invested with plenitude of power in heaven and earth.

10. *Say among the heathen,* that *the* LORD *reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.*

In other words—Make proclamation, therefore, O ye apostles and preachers of the Gospel, that a new and eternal kingdom is erected; the usurped empire of Satan is overthrown, and the Lord Jesus, having redeemed mankind, reigneth in the hearts of his people by faith; a community is formed, not upon the plan of secular policy, but upon the divine prin-

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ciple of heavenly love; it is established on immoveable foundations, nor shall the gates of hell prevail against it: righteousness shall dwell in it, since He, who is the King of Righteousness, presides, directs, and determines all things, by his Word, and his Spirit.

11. *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof:* 12. *Let the field be joyful, and all that* is *therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.*

Transported with a view of these grand events, and beholding in spirit the advent of King Messiah, the Psalmist exults in most jubilant and triumphant strains, calling the whole creation to break forth into joy, and to celebrate the glories of redemption. The heavens, with the innumerable orbs fixed in them, which, while they roll and shine, declare the glory of beatified saints; the earth, which, made fertile by celestial influences, showeth the work of grace on the hearts of men here below; the field, which, crowned with the produce of an hundred fold, displayeth an emblem of the fruit yielded by the seed of the word in the church; the trees of the wood, lofty, verdant, and diffuse, apt representatives of holy persons, those "trees of righteousness," the "planting "of Jehovah," Isa. lxi. 3. whose examples are eminent, fair, and extensive; all these are, by the Prophet, excited to join in a chorus of thanksgiving to the Maker and Redeemer of the world.

13. *For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.*

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The coming of Christ is twofold; first he came to sanctify the creature, and he will come again to glorify it. Either of his kingdoms, that of grace, or that of glory, may be signified by his "judging the "world in righteousness and truth." If creation be represented as rejoicing at the establishment of the former, how much greater will the joy be at the approach of the latter! seeing that, notwithstanding Christ be long since come in the flesh, though he be ascended into heaven, and have sent the Spirit from thence, yet "the whole creation," as the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 22. "groaneth and travaileth in "pain together until now, expecting to be delivered, "from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious "liberty of the sons of God. And not only they, "but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of "the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within our-"selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the re-"demption of the body;" when at the renovation of all things, man, new made, shall return to the days of his youth, to begin an immortal spring, and be for ever young.

PSALM XCVII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, 1. the reign of Christ is again celebrated, and the nations are again called to rejoice on that account: 2—7. He is described as taking vengeance on his enemies, overthrowing idolatry

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in the Heathen world, commanding adoration from all creatures, and, 8, 9. inspiring gladness into the church, by subduing her enemies: 10—12. The duties of holiness, thankfulness, and religious joy, are inculcated.

1. *The* LORD *reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad* thereof.

Triumphant over death and hell, the Lord Jesus is gone up on high, and "reigneth." What greater cause can the whole earth have to "rejoice;" yea, even the most distant isles of the Gentiles, to "be "glad," and to sing for joy; since they are all become his subjects, and share the unspeakable blessings of so gracious a reign? We Britons, as inhabiting one of those Heathen isles, and enjoying so fair a portion of evangelical blessings, have reason to repeat this verse, with a particular pleasure and energy. The Hebrews called by the name of "isles," אִיִּים, not only countries surrounded by the sea, but all the countries which the sea divided from them; so that the term became synonymous with "Gentiles." Thus, it is said, Isa. xlii. 4. "The "ISLES shall wait for his law;" which passage, Matt. xii. 21. is expounded as follows: "In him shall the "GENTILES trust."

2. *Clouds and darkness* are *round about him: righteousness and judgement* are *the habitation*, or, *establishment, of his throne.*

When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal na-

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ture with his beneficent rays. But when we are to conceive an idea of him, as going forth, in "justice "and judgement," to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by "clouds and "darkness;" from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and impenitent.

3. *A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.* 4. *His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled.* 5. *The hills melted like wax at the presence of the* LORD; *at the presence of the* LORD *of the whole earth.*

The judgements of God, and their effects upon the world, are here set forth, under the usual similitude of lightning and fire from heaven, causing the earth to tremble, and the mountains to melt and dissolve away. The exaltation of Christ to the throne of his kingdom, was followed by a dreadful display of that vengeance which broke in pieces the Jewish nation, and brought their civil and religious polity to an utter dissolution. In the history of their destruction, the world of the ungodly may view a striking picture of the great and terrible day, when the Lord Jesus shall render a recompense to all his enemies. He is then to descend in flaming fire; lightnings shall be his harbingers; the earth shall tremble; and the hills shall, literally, "melt like "wax at the presence of Jehovah."

6. *The heavens declare his righteousness; and all the people see his glory.*

"The heavens," by the manifestation of vengeance

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from thence, reveal, "declare," and proclaim, the "righteous" judgements of Messiah; and "all the "people" upon earth are witnesses of the "glory" of his victory over every thing that opposeth itself to the establishment of his kingdom. This will be more eminently the case at the second advent, when the trumpet of the archangel shall proclaim his approach in the clouds of heaven, and all the tribes of the earth shall see him coming in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

7. *Confounded be*, or, *shall be, all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all* ye *gods.*

When Jesus was exalted, his Gospel published, and his power and glory made known in the Heathen world, men grew "ashamed" of their "images, and "boasted themselves in their idols" no more. The last clause of our verse, "Worship him, all ye gods," declare the supremacy of Christ over all that are called gods, אֱלֹהִים, in heaven and in earth, who are enjoined to pay adoration unto him, instead of claiming it for themselves.

8. *Sion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgements, O* LORD. 9. *For thou,* LORD, art *high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.*

The inhabitants of the new "Sion," or the people of God, "heard" the tidings, that idols and idolatry were fallen, and the Lord Jesus reigned triumphant; they heard, and "were glad; the "daughters of Judah," or Christian churches, "rejoiced" in the Holy Ghost, with joy unspeakable,

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"because of these judgements" of their God upon his enemies, whereby he evinced himself superior to the powers of the earth, and the gods of the nations. Thus, at the fall of Babylon, it is said, Rev. xviii. 20. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apos-"tles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on "her." And Eusebius speaks, in the following terms, of the times under Constantine, which succeeded the overthrow of Maxentius and Maximin; "A bright and glorious day, no cloud overshadowing "it, did enlighten, with rays of heavenly light, "the churches of Christ over all the earth;—and "among all Christians there was an inexpressible "joy, and a kind of celestial gladness." Ecclesiast. Hist. b. x.

10. *Ye that love the* LORD, *hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*

Having sung the glory of the Redeemer, the Psalmist delineates the duty of the redeemed. They are characterized by their "love of God;" they are enjoined to "hate evil;" this hatred is, indeed, a consequence, and a sure proof, of that love, when it is genuine and sincere. Religion must be rooted in the heart, and spring from thence. A Christian must not only serve God outwardly, but must inwardly "love" him; he must not content himself with abstaining from overt acts of sin, but must truly "hate" it. They who do so, are "the saints "of God, whose souls he preserveth" from evil, and will finally "deliver" from the evil one, and his

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associates, by a happy death, and a glorious resurrection.

11. *Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the upright in heart.*

However gloomy our prospects may at any time be, let us wait patiently, as the husbandman doth, all the winter, in expectation of a future crop, from the seed which lieth buried in the earth. "Light "and gladness are sown for the righteous and true "hearted," though they may not yet appear; the seed-time is in this world; the harvest will be in that to come. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint "not." Gal. vi. 9.

12. *Rejoice in the* LORD, *ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

Tribulation itself, therefore, should not prevent our "rejoicing in Jehovah our righteousness," who justifieth us from our sins; no adversity ought to make us negligent in celebrating, with thanksgiving, the "commemorations of his holiness," which the church hath appointed to be observed; to the end that we may always remember, with gratitude, how great things he hath done for us already, and reflect, with comfort, on those much greater things which he hath promised to do for us hereafter.

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NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCVIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this evangelical hymn, the Prophet, 1—3. extols the miracles, the victory, the salvation, the righteousness, the mercy, and truth, of the Redeemer; on account of which, 4—9. he calls upon man, and the whole creation, to rejoice and praise Jehovah.

1. *O sing unto the* LORD *a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.*

New mercies and wonders demand new songs. And what mercies, what wonders, can be compared with those wrought by the holy Jesus? "Go and "tell John," saith he to John's disciples; go and tell all the world, saith he to his own disciples, "the "things which ye see and hear;" the marvellous things which I do to the bodies and to the souls of men. "The blind receive their sight," and the ignorant minds are enlightened with knowledge; "the lame walk," and strength is communicated to impotent souls; "the lepers are cleansed," and the lascivious rendered chaste; "the deaf hear," and the obstinate listen to instruction and reproof; "the "dead are raised," and sinners justified; "the "Gospel is preached," and the world converted. "His own right hand, and his holy arm," hath done

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these marvellous things, without and against all worldly power; not by spear and sword, but by patience and charity, he hath "gotten the victory," and gained the glorious day.

2. *The* LORD *hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.*

The "salvation" of Jehovah was "made known" by the preaching of Christ himself in Judea, for the space of three years; his "righteousness," whereby sinners are justified, was "openly showed," by the sermons of his apostles, "in the sight of the hea-" then." Still let that salvation be made known, still let that righteousness be openly showed, by the ministers of the Gospel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and the remnant of the Jews converted; until antichrist be overthrown, and death himself fallen before the all-conquering cross.

3. *He hath remembered his mercy and truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

In sending the Messiah, God showed himself mindful of the promises, which "mercy" prompted him to make, and "truth" required him to perform. These promises were made to "the house of "Israel;" to the lost sheep of that house, Christ declared himself sent; and the apostles offered salvation first to the Jews: but to them it was never intended that evangelical blessings should be confined. The prophets spake in plain terms of the call of the Gentiles, who were to be adopted into the holy family, and made the children of Abraham. The

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Gospel was accordingly preached to the nations, the apostles made their progress through the world, and "all the ends of the earth saw the salvation of God." The Jews fell from the faith of their fathers, and, to this day, continue in their apostasy. And are not the Gentiles, in their turn, falling away, after the same example of unbelief? "Remember," yet once again, O Lord, thy "mercy and truth toward the "house of Israel;" yet once again let "all the ends "of the earth see thy salvation."

4. *Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD, *all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.* 5. *Sing unto the* LORD *with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.* 6. *With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the* LORD *the King.*

The Psalmist, beholding in spirit the accomplishment of the promises, the advent of Christ, and the glory of his kingdom, thinks it criminal in any creature to be silent; he bids the whole earth break forth into joy, and exult in God our Saviour, with every token of gratitude and thankfulness; with voices, and instruments of all kinds, in perfect harmony, with tempers and affections according in like manner, men are enjoined to sound aloud the praises of their great Redeemer.

7. *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.* 8. *Let the floods clap* their *hands, let the hills be joyful together,* 9. *Before the* LORD; *for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*

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The inanimate parts of creation are called upon to bear their parts in the new song, and to fill up the universal chorus of praise and thanksgiving, in honour of him that sitteth upon the throne. Or, perhaps, the converted Heathen nations are intended under the figures of the "sea," the "rivers," and the "hills," and their exultations expressed by the noise of many waters, their beauty and fruitfulness by those of the hills, when, crowned with plenty, they, as it were, laugh and sing, at the approach of harvest. The subject of this general joy is, as before, in Psalm xcvi. 13. the advent of Messiah to reform the world, to execute judgement upon the wicked, and to establish a kingdom of righteousness upon the earth. We expect his second advent to restore all things, to judge the world, to condemn his enemies, and to begin his "glorious" reign. Then shall heaven and earth rejoice, and the joy of the redeemed shall be full.

PSALM XCIX.

ARGUMENT.

Under images borrowed from the old dispensation, the Prophet celebrates, 1. the reign of Messiah, and the submission of his enemies; 2—4. his exaltation, holiness, power, and justice; which, 5. men are exhorted to acknowledge and adore. 6—9. The examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, are introduced, to encourage us in worshipping and serving our God and Saviour.

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1. *The* LORD *reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth* between *the cherubims; let the earth be moved*, or, *bow.*

Jehovah reigneth in the Christian church, as he did of old in the Jewish temple; when he appeared between the cherubims in the holy of holies, in the form and likeness of a MAN, encompassed with "glory," Ezek. i. 26. Numb. vii. 89.; he subdued the enemies of Israel, when they raged most furiously against his people; he will also bring into subjection the adversaries of the Gospel, and finally render us victorious over the powers of darkness. The passions and affections may mutiny and rebel; but if Christ reign in the heart by faith, they must soon tremble and submit.

2. *The* LORD is *great in Zion, and he* is *high above all people.* 3. *Let them praise thy great and terrible name;* for *it* is *holy.*

The power and pre-eminence of the Redeemer, whom no creature is able to resist, are reasons why all should save themselves, by yielding in time to his sceptre; by taking the benefit of his protection, instead of incurring his displeasure; by "praising "his great, terrible, and holy name," instead of suffering the almighty vengeance, which he, who owns that Name, can inflict.

4. *The King's strength also loveth judgement; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgement and righteousness in Jacob.* 5. *Exalt ye the* LORD *our God, and worship at his footstool;* for *he* is *holy.*

For although the "strength" of our King be

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infinite, yet it is never exerted, but in "righ-" teousness" and just "judgement," which are his delight: they compose the firm basis of his throne, and direct his whole administration. Impenitent rebels must feel the weight of his arm, and none can accuse the justice of their punishment: but in all other cases, he is "mighty only to save:" Isa. lxiii. 1. This holiness of his proceedings, this due temperament of justice with mercy, the redeemed are exhorted to acknowledge and to proclaim, falling down before the throne, and uttering the angelical trisagion, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which "was, and is, and is to come."

6. *Moses and Aaron among his priests,* or, *chief rulers, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the* LORD, *and he answered them.* 7. *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance* that *he gave them.*

To encourage the faithful in the worship of God, the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, are adduced, men of like infirmities with ourselves, whose prayers were heard, both for themselves and others, and answers were returned to them from the mystic "cloud," that symbol of the divine presence, which, for a while, was itinerant with the camp in the wilderness, and then became fixed in the tabernacle at Shiloh till its last removal to mount Sion. These men were heard through the intercession of the great Mediator, whom they represented. Through that same intercession, our prayers also are heard, if we

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" keep his testimonies, and the ordinances that he " hath given us."

8. *Thou answeredst them, O* LORD *our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*

The construction of the verse seems to be this: " O Lord our God, thou didst hear, or answer " them," that is, the afore-mentioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; " thou be- " camest a forbearing God for them," or, at their intercession; and that, " even when punishing," or, when thou hadst begun to punish, " the wicked " deeds of them," that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case, when Moses interceded for the idolaters; Exod. xxxii. 32. Aaron for the schismatics; Numb. xvi. 47. and Samuel for the whole nation; 1 Sam. vii. 9. " Pray one for another," saith an apostle to Christians, " that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent " prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James v. 16.

9. *Exalt the* LORD *our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the* LORD *our God* is *holy.*

The Psalmist repeats his exhortation, enforced by the preceding examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and again invites all people to worship a " holy" God in a " holy" place, and to adore the consummate rectitude of all his proceedings, singing, with the spirits above, " Great and marvellous are " thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are " thy ways, thou King of saints." Rev. xv. 3.

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PSALM C.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of him who was kind and gracious to them beyond expression. Accordingly, we Christians now properly use this Psalm in acknowledgement of God's wonderful love to us in Christ; by whom we offer up continually spiritual sacrifices, for redeeming us by the sacrifice which he made of himself; for making the world anew, and creating us again unto good works; according to his faithful promises, which we may depend upon for ever.

PATRICK.

1. *Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD, *all ye lands: 2. Serve the* LORD *with gladness: come before his presence with singing.*

The Prophet addresseth himself to "all lands," or to "all the earth;" to Gentiles, as well as Jews. He exhorteth them to "make a joyful noise," a noise like that of the trumpets at the time of jubilee, a sound of universal triumph and exultation, in honour of "Jehovah," now become their Lord and Saviour. The service of this our Master is perfect freedom; it is a service of love, a freedom from Pharaoh and the task-masters, from Satan and our own imperious lusts; it is a redemption from the most cruel bond-

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age, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Let us therefore do as we are commanded; let us "serve the Lord with gladness;" and when we come "before his presence" in the temple, let it be "with "singing" to the praise and glory of our Redeemer. Thus he is served in heaven, and thus he delighteth to be served on earth.

3. *Know ye that the* LORD *he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* Or, *He hath made us, and we are his* *, *his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

The motives here urged for serving and praising Jehovah, are the same with those above, in Psalm xcv. 6, 7. namely, that he is our "God," engaged by covenant on our behalf; that his hands created us, and have since new created us; that we stand in the peculiar relation of his "people," whom he hath chosen to himself, and over whom he presideth as King; that we are "the sheep of his pasture," for whom the good Shepherd laid down his life, and whom he nourisheth, by the word and sacraments, unto eternal life. These are points which every Christian ought to "know" and believe, unto his soul's health. And whoever doth know them aright, will ever be ready with heart and voice to obey the injunction which followeth in the next verse.

* "I am persuaded that the Masoretical correction ולו (and "we are *his*) is right: the construction and parallelism both fa-"vour it." Bishop LOWTH. A correspondent suggests—Might not the clause be rendered interrogatively—"Are not we his "people, and the sheep of his pasture?"

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4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and *bless his name.*

The Christian church is a temple, whose "gates" stand continually open, for the admission of the nations from all the four quarters of the world. Rev. xxi. 13. 25. Into the "courts" of this temple, which are now truly "courts of the Gentiles," all men are invited to come, and offer their evangelical sacrifices of "confession and praise;" to express their gratitude to their Saviour, and "bless" his gracious and hallowed "name." How glorious will be that day, which shall behold the everlasting gates of heaven lifting up their heads, and disclosing to view those courts above, into which the children of the resurrection are to enter, there, with angels and archangels, to dwell and sing for evermore!

5. *For the* LORD is *good; his mercy* is *everlasting: and his truth* endureth *to all generations.*

"Jehovah is good;" he is the source of all beauty and perfection in the creature; how altogether lovely must he needs be in himself! "His mercy is ever-"lasting," extending through time into eternity; and "his truth," or fidelity in accomplishing his promises, "endureth to all generations," evidenced to the whole race of mankind, from Adam to his last born son. The Psalms which celebrate these attributes, will never, therefore, be out of date, but each successive generation will chant them with fresh propriety, and fresh delight, until by saints and angels they are sung new in the kingdom of God.

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PSALM CI.

ARGUMENT.

In the person of David, advanced to the throne of Israel, we hear King Messiah declaring how he intended to walk, and to govern his household the church; and also describing the qualifications which he should require in his ministers and servants.

1. *I will sing of mercy and judgement: unto thee, O* LORD, *will I sing.*

David, having determined to sing unto Jehovah, chooseth for his theme "mercy and judgement;" either that mercy which God hath shown to him, and that judgement which hath been inflicted on his enemies; or else, that upright administration of mercy and judgement, with which he himself intended to bless his people. The righteous administration of mercy and judgement in the kingdom of Messiah is a topic on which his subjects always expatiate with pleasure and profit. His mercy encourageth the greatest of sinners to hope; his judgements forbid the best of men to presume.

2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*

In return for the favours of Heaven, we hear the Israelitish monarch declaring his resolution, to set his court and kingdom an example of true wisdom, and unshaken integrity; at the same time, sighing

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for that visitation of divine grace, which alone could enable him to put his resolution in practice—"O "when wilt thou come unto me?" This was ever the voice of the church, longing for the presence of God in human nature, "O when wilt thou come unto "me?" And this must ever be the wish of a Christian, who knoweth that though in himself he be nothing, yet that he can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth him by his Spirit in the inner man. Messiah was the only king of Israel, whose life held forth to his subjects a pattern of wisdom and righteousness, and whose death procured them grace, in their different measures and degrees, to follow it.

3. *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside,* it *shall not cleave to me.*

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes;" that is, I will not propose to myself, or think of carrying into execution, any iniquitous scheme of politics, however advantageous and tempting it may appear; I will turn away my eyes and my attention, and reject it at once: "I hate the work of them that "turn aside;" of them who, in their counsels and their actions, deviate from the divine law to serve their own interest; "it shall not cleave to me;" no such corrupt principle shall adhere to my soul, or find a place in my affections. How noble a resolution for a king to make; but how difficult an one for a king to keep! Thou only, O King of Righteousness, didst never set any wicked thing before thine

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eyes; thou only hadst a perfect aversion to the ways of transgressors.

4. *A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.*

As is the king, so will be the court; as is the master of the house, such will be those of his household. David, having resolved to "walk within his "house with a perfect," a sincere and upright "heart," determines at the same time to expel from thence all whose hearts were perverted and depraved: as he would "set no wicked thing before his eyes," so neither would he form any connexions with "wicked "persons;" they should not be of his acquaintance, much less should they be his favourites. In the same manner speaketh our heavenly King, with regard to the appointment of his ministers and servants —"I know you not, whence you are; depart from "me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke xiii. 27.

5. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud*, or, *extended, and* therefore, *insatiable, heart, will not I suffer.*

Detraction, ambition, and avarice, are three weeds which spring and flourish in the rich soil of a court. The Psalmist declareth his resolution to undertake the difficult task of eradicating them, for the benefit of his people, that Israelites might not be harassed by informers, or oppressed by insolent and rapacious ministers. Shall we imagine these vices less odious in the eyes of that King, whose character was composed of humility and charity? or will Christ admit

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those tempers into the court of heaven, which David determined to exclude from his court upon earth?

6. *Mine eyes* shall be *upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*

The "eyes" of princes cannot be better employed than in looking around them, in order to choose, from among their own subjects, fit and able men to transact the public business; men of inviolable "fidelity," and unshaken integrity; men who know how to think aright, and how to speak what they think; men likewise who "walk in the perfect way" of holiness, who do not disgrace their politics by their lives, or prejudice their master's cause by their sins, more than they can ever advance it by their abilities. Bishops may be called the "eyes" of Christ; they are to "overlook" his people, and we pray him at the seasons of ordination, "so to guide and govern "their minds, that they may faithfully and wisely "make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred "ministry of the church."

7. *He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*

To purge a court of "deceit" and "falsehood," was a resolution worthy King David, worthy the representative of him, who styleth himself THE TRUTH, from whose heavenly palace and city will be for ever excluded, as St. John informeth us, "whosoever loveth and maketh A LIE." Rev. xxii. 15.

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8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the* LORD.

Every earthly prince should consider himself as raised to a throne, and invested with power, "for "the punishment of wickedness and vice, and the "maintenance of God's true religion and virtue." "Early," therefore, in the "morning" of his reign, he should set about the work of reformation, that so the blessings of heaven may descend upon himself and his people, according to the infallible promises of the Most High. And let each individual, in like manner, and for the same reason, be zealous and diligent to reform his own heart and ways, ever mindful of that future most awful morning, when the King of Righteousness shall "cut off," with the sword of eternal judgement, "all wicked doers from "that city of Jehovah," the new and heavenly Jerusalem.

TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is entitled, "A prayer of the afflicted, "when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his "complaint before the Lord." It seems to have been written, during the captivity, by one of the prophets, who, like Daniel in parallel circumstances, 1, 2. maketh supplication before his God,

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3—11. setteth forth, in the most affecting strains, his wretched and sorrowful estate, or rather, perhaps, that of Jerusalem, which he personates; 12. he comforteth himself, by reflecting on the eternity and immutability of Jehovah; 13—22. he predicteth and describeth the restoration of Sion, with her enlargement by the accession of the Gentiles, when Messiah shall have visited and redeemed her; 23, 24. he returneth again to his lamentations; but 25—28. again reposeth his confidence on him who created all things, and who would not fail to make good his word and promise, if not to the generation then present, yet to their posterity. This is the fifth of those styled "Penitential Psalms;" and St. Paul, Heb. i. 10. hath asserted, that it is addressed to the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world.

1. *Hear my prayer, O* LORD, *and let my cry come unto thee.* 2. *Hide not thy face from me in the day* when *I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day* when *I call, answer me speedily.*

Sin and sorrow force "prayers" and "cries" from the sons of Adam. The first petition here preferred is, that these prayers and cries may be "heard" in heaven. The day of human life is "a "day of trouble," a day of darkness and gloominess, which nothing can brighten, but the light of God's

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"countenance;" nothing can render comfortable, but a "speedy answer" of mercy and peace from above.

3. *For my days are consumed away like,* or, *in, smoke, and my bones are burnt as an hearth,* or, *a fire-brand.*

The effects of extreme grief on the human frame are compared to those which fire produceth upon fuel. It exhausts the radical moisture, and, by so doing, soon consumes the substance. A man's time and his strength evaporate in melancholy, and his "bones," those pillars and supports of his body, become like wood, on which the fire hath done its work, and left it without sap, and without cohesion. A single penitent, or a whole church, bewailing their respective transgressions, when under the rod of God, may use these words, and will understand the force of them.

4. *My heart is smitten and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread.*

The metaphor is continued, and the "heart" itself, out of which flow the streams of life, is represented as suffering that from grief, which the "grass" of the field suffers from the burning heat of the sun: it is "smitten, and withered." And when grief hath thus dejected the spirits, the man has no appetite for that food which is to recruit and elevate them. Ahab, smitten with one kind of grief, David with another, and Daniel with a third, all "forgot," or "refused, to eat their bread:" 1 Kings xxi. 4. 2 Sam. xii. 16. Dan. x. 3. Such natural companions are "mourning and fasting."

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5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.*

Extremity of sorrow causeth the flesh to waste, and the bones to press upon the skin, through which they are ready to force their way. Sickness is the chastisement of heaven, inflicted often upon us, to supply the want of that discipline, which we should exercise upon ourselves. "For if we would judge "ourselves, we should not be judged. But when "we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that "we should not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. xi. 31.

6. *I am like the pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl,* or, *bittern, of the desert,* or, *of waste, ruinous places.* 7. *I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.*

The sorrowful man is naturally desirous of retiring from the world, to vent his complaints in solitude, and to pass the nights in watchfulness and prayer. In such a situation the true penitent placeth himself, worthily to bewail his sins, and deprecate the judgements of his God. And in such a situation did captivity place the daughter of Sion, that she might do likewise. The use which Daniel made of it for this purpose, may be seen in his ixth chapter.

8. *Mine enemies reproach me all the day:* and *they that are mad against me, are sworn against me.*

The scoffs and reproaches of men are generally added to the chastisements of God; or rather, perhaps, are a part, and sometimes the bitterest part, of them. How the enemies of Jerusalem behaved, in the day of her calamity, is well known. How car-

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nal and ungodly men behave to a penitent, when mourning for his sins, under the afflicting hand of Heaven, is as well known.

9. *For*, or, *Therefore, I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.* 10. *Because of thine indignation and wrath; for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*

By "eating ashes, and drinking tears," we may understand the same as if it had been said, "I have "eaten the bread of humiliation, and drank the wa- "ter of affliction;" ashes being the emblem of one, and tears the consequence of the other; while the actions of "eating and drinking," intimate to us the fulness and satiety which the sufferer had experienced of both, from the "wrath and indignation of God." Prosperity and adversity are from him: "he lifteth "up, and he casteth down;" he lifteth up Jerusalem above all the earth; and he cast her down, to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles.

11. *My days* are *like a shadow that declineth: and I am withered like grass.* 12. *But thou, O* LORD, *shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.*

A "shadow" never continueth in one stay, but is still gliding imperceptibly on, lengthening as it goes, and at last vanisheth into darkness. The period of its existence is limited to a day at farthest. The rising sun gives it birth, and in that moment when the sun sets it is no more. The "grass" of the field, in like manner, hath a being of the same duration. In the morning, clothed with verdure and beauty,

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refresheth and delighteth the eye of the beholder; but the evening findeth it cut down, dried up, and withered. Such is the life of man, sojourning in the land of his captivity, and doing penance for his sins. But the eternity of Jehovah, the infallibility of his promises, and the remembrance of his former works and mercies, comfort our hearts, and encourage us to hope, nay, even to rejoice, in the midst of sorrow and tribulation.

13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Sion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.* 14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*

From this passage, and what follows, it appears, that the suppliant, in this Psalm, bewails not only his own miseries, but those of the church. Israel was in captivity, and Sion a desolation. A "time" notwithstanding, a "set time," there was at hand, when God had promised to "arise, and to have "mercy upon her." The bowels of her children yearned over her ruins; they longed to see her rebuilt, and were ready, whenever the word of command should be given, to set heart and hand to the blessed work. Such ought to be our affection towards our Sion, however afflicted and destitute she may, at any time, appear to be; such should be our faith in the promises of God concerning the future glorification of his church, at the time appointed.

15. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the* LORD: *and all the kings of the earth thy glory.* 16. *When the* LORD *shall build up Sion, he shall*

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appear in his glory. 17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*

The object to which the prophets of old had chiefly respect, was not only the deliverance of Israel from Babylon, and the rebuilding of the material temple, but the salvation of sinners, and the erection of the Christian church, in the days of Messiah's kingdom. "When the Lord" Jesus thus "built up Sion, he appeared in his glory: the hea-"then feared his name, and all the kings of the "earth" adored his majesty, because he had "re-"garded the prayer of the destitute" sons of Adam, in their worse than Babylonish captivity, and had arisen himself to be their Saviour and mighty Deliverer. We, in these latter days, look and pray for the second appearance of the same Redeemer, with power and great glory, to raise the dead, and to build up from the dust a Jerusalem which shall experience no more vicissitudes, but continue for ever in unchangeable beauty and brightness.

18. *This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.*

The history of "this" redemption and restoration by Messiah, thus foretold, hath been "written" in the Gospel for the benefit of "after generations," to the end that "the people who are created" anew in Christ Jesus may from age to age praise Jehovah, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; as it is done at this day in the church, and ever will continue to be done, till the choirs of heaven and earth shall be united before the throne of the Lamb.

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19. *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the* LORD *behold the earth;* 20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death;* 21. *To declare the name of the* LORD *in Sion, and his praise in Jerusalem;* 22. *When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the* LORD.

Redemption is the subject of praise in the Christian church; and the process of that great work is here described by images borrowed from the temporal deliverance and restoration of Israel. God is represented as looking with an eye of pity from heaven upon poor mankind; as hearing the groans of sinners, fast bound in the chains of their sins, and sentenced to death eternal; as coming down to forgive and to release them; that, being so forgiven and released, they might cause the church to resound with his praises, when, upon the preaching of the Gospel, it should be filled with converts, assembled from every people and kingdom of the world. Look down, O Lord Jesu, yet once again upon thy servants, still under the dominion of death, and the bondage of corruption; loose these chains, even these also, O Lord, and bring us forth into the glorious liberty of thy children; that, with the whole assembly of the redeemed, in the heavenly Jerusalem, we may bless and praise thy name for ever and ever.

23. *He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.*

The Prophet, in the person of captive Sion, having, from verse 13. to verse 22. expressed his faith and hope in the promised redemption, now returns to

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his mournful complaints, as at verse 11. Israel doubteth not of God's veracity, but feareth lest his heavy hand should crush the generation then in being, before they should behold the expiration of their troubles. They were in "the way," but their "strength" was so "weakened," and their "days "shortened," that they almost despaired of holding out to their journey's end. A sore trial hath the Christian church to undergo in the last days, before the second advent of her Lord and Saviour. Strong faith and invincible patience will be necessary, to enable her to endure until the end shall come.

24. And I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are *throughout all generations.*

Israel prayeth that the holy seed might not be extirpated, and perish by a kind of untimely death, ere yet the promise had been made good, and Sion had seen the salvation of her God. Every man hath reason to pray, that God would not "take him away "in the midst of his days," or call upon him when unprepared; but that time may be allowed him to perfect his repentance, and to work out his salvation.

25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are *the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. 27. But thou* art *the same, and thy years shall have no end.*

Amidst the changes and chances of this mortal

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life, one topic of consolation will ever remain, namely, the eternity and immutability of God our Saviour, of him who was, and is, and is to come. Kingdoms and empires may rise and fall; nay, the heavens and the earth, as they were originally produced and formed by the WORD of God, the Son, or second person in the Trinity, to whom the Psalmist here addresseth himself, see Heb. i. 10; so will they, at the day appointed, be folded up and laid aside, as an old and worn-out garment; or, if the substance remain, the present form and fashion of them will perish, and they will be utterly changed and altered from the state in which they now are. But Jehovah is ever the same; his years have no end, nor can his promise fail, any more than himself. "Heaven and "earth," saith he, "shall pass away; but my words "shall not pass away." Matt. xxiv. 35.

28. *The children of thy servants shall continue; and their seed shall be established before thee.*

Whatever be the fate of the present generation, whether they may live to see the accomplishment of all that has been foretold, or not, yet the word of God standeth sure; there shall be always a church, and a holy seed, to whom the promises shall be made good. They have already been fulfilled with regard to the advent of Messiah, and the vocation of the Gentiles. The events which are behind will be brought forward and come to pass in their seasons, until the counsel of God shall be finished, and every prediction receive its full accomplishment in the glorification of the redeemed.

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PSALM CIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this evangelical and most comfortable hymn, David, after, 1, 2. exciting himself to the work, 3—5. praiseth Jehovah for the mercies of redemption; 6, 7. celebrateth his goodness to Moses and Israel; 8—13. setteth forth the divine philanthropy, under various beautiful expressions and images; 14—16. describeth, in a manner wonderfully affecting, man's frail and perishable state; but, 17, 18. leadeth him, for consolation, to the everlasting mercy of God in Christ, the stability of whose throne and kingdom, 19. he declareth, and, 20—22. calleth upon heaven and earth to join with him in blessing and praising his holy name.

1. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul; and all that is within me*, bless *his holy name*.

The Psalmist, about to utter a song of praise, first endeavours to awaken and stir up his "soul" to the joyful task. He calleth forth all his powers and faculties, "all that is within him," that every part of his frame may glorify its Saviour; that the understanding may know him, the will choose him, the affections delight in him, the heart believe in him, and the

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tongue confess him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, "and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

2. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Thanksgiving cannot be sincere and hearty, unless a man bear impressed upon his mind, at the time, a quick sense of "benefits" received; and "benefits" we are most of us apt to "forget;" those, especially, which are conferred upon us by God. Therefore David repeateth his self-awakening call, and summoneth all his powers of recollection, that none of the divine favours might continue unnoticed and unacknowledged. A catalogue of such particular mercies, temporal and spiritual, as each individual hath experienced through life, might be of service, to refresh the memory, upon this important head.

3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thine infirmities.*

At the head of God's mercies must for ever stand "remission of sin," or that full and free pardon purchased for us by Jesus Christ, whereby, if we truly repent and believe in him, our transgressions, though ever so many, and ever so great, are done away, and become as if they had never been; from a state of guilt we pass into one of justification, from a state of enmity into one of reconciliation, from a state of servitude into one of liberty and sonship. Next to the pardon of sin, considered as a crime, we are to commemorate the cure of it, considered as a disease, or indeed as a complication of diseases—"Who "healeth all thine infirmities." The body experienceth the melancholy consequences of Adam's

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offence, and is subject to many "infirmities;" but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps there are spiritual maladies similar to all corporeal ones. When Jesus Christ was upon earth, he proved himself the Physician of men's souls, by the cures which he wrought upon their bodies. It is he alone who "forgiveth "all our iniquities;" it is he alone who "healeth all "our infirmities." And the person who findeth his sin "cured," hath a well-grounded assurance that it is "forgiven."

4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth,* or, *encircleth, thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.*

Man hath two "lives;" he is, therefore, subject to a double "destruction;" and, consequently, capable of a two-fold "redemption." He who is recovered from sickness, and thereby redeemed from that destruction which natural death bringeth upon the body, will undoubtedly sing this strain in transports of gratitude; and he ought so to do. But what will be the sensations of him who celebrates, in the same words, the spiritual redemption of his soul from death and destruction everlasting? How is he "crowned" with the "loving kindness" of Jehovah; how is he "encircled" by the arms of "mercy!" "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her "left hand riches and honour:" never ending "length of days;" true "riches," that abide for

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ever; and "the honour which cometh from God "only."

5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good* things; so that *thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

It is God who giveth us the "good things" of this world, and who giveth us likewise an appetite and a taste to enjoy them. It is God who restoreth a body, emaciated by sickness, to bloom, vigour, and agility. And he doth greater things than these. He "satisfieth" all the desires of the soul with a banquet of spiritual dainties, and bestoweth on her a relish for the same. By the renovating power of his Spirit, he restoreth her from decrepitude, to the health and strength of a young "eagle *," so that she can ascend up on high, and contemplate the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. Thus, at the day of the resurrection, clothed anew with salvation and glory, the body likewise shall arise from earth, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven, to begin an immortal life, and be for ever young.

6. *The* LORD *executeth righteousness and judgement for all* that are *oppressed.* 7. *He made known*

* Of all birds it is known that they have yearly their moulting times, when they shed their old, and are fresh furnished with a new stock of feathers. This is most observable of hawks and vultures, and especially of "eagles," which, when they are near an hundred years old, cast their feathers, and become bald and like young ones, and then new feathers sprout forth. Thus St. Ambrose, "Aquila longam ætatem ducit, dum vetustis plumis "fatiscentibus, novâ pennarum successione juvenescit." Dr. HAMMOND.

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his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

From a consideration of his own particular case, the Psalmist maketh a general reflection on that attribute of God, which inclineth him to deliver his people, and to punish their oppressors, of what kind soever they be. And here that grand display of the "ways" and "works" of Jehovah, the redemption of "Israel" by the hand of "Moses," immediately occurs, and is celebrated. Thus each private mercy, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, should remind us of that public and universal blessing of redemption by Jesus Christ, from which every other blessing floweth, as a stream from its fountain, and for which God ought, therefore, upon all occasions, to be praised and glorified.

8. *The* LORD is *merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

When Moses desired Jehovah to show him his "way" and his "glory," Exod. xxxiii. 13. 18. Jehovah passed by, and proclaimed himself, as here, "Jehovah, merciful and gracious," &c. Exod. xxxiv. 6. How full of consolation to the penitent soul are all the words of this verse! "The LORD "is merciful," רחום, the bowels of his tender compassion yearn over us, as those of a mother yearn over the child of her womb; "yea, the woman may "forget her sucking child, yet can he not forget us:" Isa. xlix. 15. He is "gracious," חנון, ready to give us freely all things that are needful for our salvation. He is "slow to anger," bearing with the frowardness of his children, with their provocations and

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relapses for 40, 50, 60, 70 years together, before he strikes the blow; giving them, by this his long suffering, time for repentance. And he is "plen- "teous in mercy," רבחסד, "great, mighty in mer- "cy," placing his chief glory in this attribute, and hereby teaching us how to estimate true greatness.

9. *He will not always chide: neither will he keep* his anger *for ever.* 10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

God's chastisements are some of the most eminent proofs of his mercy. They are sent to reclaim us, and to save us from eternal punishment. They continue not always, but are removed when they have done their work; and while they last, are as nothing in comparison of those heavy stripes which our sins have deserved.

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth,* so *great is his mercy towards them that fear him.* 12. *As far as the east is from the west,* so *far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* 13. *Like as a father pitieth* his *children,* so *the* LORD *pitieth them that fear him.*

We are here presented with three of the most beautiful, apposite, and comforting similitudes in the world. When we lift up our eyes, and behold around us the lofty and stupendous vault of heaven, encircling, protecting, enlightening, refreshing, and cherishing the earth, and all things that are therein, we are bidden to contemplate in this glass the immeasurable height, the boundless extent, and the salutary influences of that mercy which, as it were,

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embraceth the creation, and is over all the works of God. Often as we view the sun arising in the east, and darkness flying away from before his face towards the opposite quarter of the heavens, we may see an image of that goodness of Jehovah, whereby we are placed in the regions of illumination, and our sins are removed and put far away out of his sight. And that our hearts may, at all times, have confidence towards God, he is represented as bearing towards us the fond and tender affection of "a father," ever ready to defend, to nourish, and to provide for us, to bear with us, to forgive us, and to receive us in the parental arms of everlasting love.

14. *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we* are *dust.* 15. As for *man, his days* are *as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.* 16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

The consideration of man's frail and perishable estate weighs with the Almighty, and prevails upon him to spare his creature. And doth not the tear of compassion start in the eye of him, who reads the description which David hath given of it in these verses? "Man," fallen, mortal man—"his days "are as grass;" like that he cometh out of the earth, and continueth but a short time upon it; "as a flower of the field," fair but transient, "so "he" unfoldeth his beauty in youth, and "flourish-"eth" a while in the vigour of manhood; but, lo, in a moment, the breath of heaven's displeasure, as a blighting "wind passeth over him, and he is gone;" he boweth his drooping head, and mingleth again

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with his native dust; his friends and his companions look for him at the accustomed spot, which he once adorned—but in vain—the earth has opened her mouth to receive him, and "his place shall know "him no more."

17. *But the mercy of the* LORD *is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children:* 18. *To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

Let not man presume, who withereth like the green herb; but then, let not man despair, whose nature, with all its infirmities, the Son of God hath taken upon him. The flower which faded in Adam, blooms anew in Christ, never to fade again. "The "mercy of Jehovah," in his Messiah, "is everlast-"ing;" and of that everlasting mercy, poor frail man is the object. It extendeth to all the generations of the faithful servants of God. Death shall not deprive them of its benefits, nor shall the grave hide them from the efficacious influence of its all-enlivening beams, which shall pierce even into those regions of desolation, and awaken the sleepers of six thousand years. Man must pay to justice the temporal penalty of his sins; but mercy shall raise him again, to receive the eternal reward, purchased by his Saviour's righteousness. A passage in the First Epistle of St. Peter doth most admirably illustrate this part of our Psalm: "We are born again not "of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the "WORD of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. "For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as

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"the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and "the flower thereof falleth away; but the WORD of "the LORD endureth for ever. And this is the "WORD which by the Gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i. 23, &c.

19. *The* LORD *hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

The glorious Person who worketh all these wonders of mercy for his people, the WORD of God, and Saviour of the world, is triumphantly seated upon his "throne in heaven," and is possessed of all power to accomplish his will, even until all things shall be subdued unto him. The glories of his throne, the brightness of his excellent majesty, and the might of his irresistible power, are described at large by St. John, Rev. iv. v. xix.

20. *Bless the* LORD, *ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.* 21. *Bless ye the* LORD, *all* ye *his hosts;* ye *ministers of his, that do his pleasure.* 22. *Bless the* LORD, *all his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*

Joy is observed to be of a diffusive and communicative nature. The heart of the Psalmist is full and overfloweth with it. Unable worthily to praise Jehovah for his mercies vouchsafed to the church, he inviteth heaven and earth to join with him, and to celebrate in full chorus, the redemption of man. St. John saw the throne of Messiah prepared; he beheld the universal band assembled; and he heard when "all the angels round about the throne, ten "thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of

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" thousands, with every creature in heaven, earth,
" and sea," lifted up their voices, and sang together,
" Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be
" unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto
" the Lamb, for ever and ever."

TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CIV.

ARGUMENT.

This is an eucharistic hymn, full of majesty and sweetness, addressed to Jehovah, as Creator of the world. It setteth forth his glory, wisdom, goodness, and power, displayed, 1—9. in the formation of the heavens and earth; 10—18. in the various provision made for beasts, and birds, and for man, the lord of all; 19—24. in the revolutions of the celestial bodies, and the consequent interchanges of day and night, of labour and rest; 25, 26. in the sea, and every thing that moveth in or upon the waters. 27—30. The dependence of the whole creation upon God for its being and well being, is beautifully represented, with, 31, 32. the glory which the Creator receiveth from his works, the pleasure which he taketh in them, and the power which he hath over them. 33. The Psalmist declareth his resolution ever to praise

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Jehovah; and, 34. predicteth the destruction of those who refuse or neglect so to do. As there is a similitude between the natural and the spiritual creation, allusions of that sort are frequently made in the ensuing comment, which may, perhaps, point out the reason why the church hath appointed this Psalm to be used on Whit-sunday.

1. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul: O* LORD *my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majesty;* Heb. *with glory and beauty.* 2. *Who coverest* thyself *with light as* with *a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain,* i. e. of *a tent,* or, *pavilion.*

The Scriptures inform us, that the same Person, who redeemed the world, did also create it. In the ciid Psalm, as we are assured by St. Paul, "to the "SON it is said, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast "laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens "are the works of thy hands." To him, therefore, as Creator, is the civth Psalm likewise addressed. He is described as invested with "the glory which he "had with the Father before the world was;" a glimpse of which he vouchsafed to the three disciples, who were present at his transfiguration, when "his "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was "white as the light." The first instance of his creating power is afforded us by the "heavens" which form a magnificent "canopy, or "pavilion," comprehending within the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof. It is enlightened by the celestial orbs sus-

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pended in it, as the holy tabernacle was by the lamps of the golden candlestick, and it was originally framed, erected, and furnished by its Maker, with more ease than man can construct and pitch a "tent" for his own temporary abode. Yet must this noble pavilion also be taken down; these resplendent and beautiful heavens must pass away, and come to an end. How glorious then shall be those "new heavens," which are to succeed them, and to endure for ever!

3. *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind.*

The divine Architect is here represented as "laying "the beams of his chambers," as compacting his lofts or stories, "in the waters." Some think the formation of the terrestrial strata in the waters, which at the beginning covered all things, is here alluded to. If it be objected, that the Psalmist, in the course of his description, is not yet arrived at the formation of the earth, but is still in the upper regions of the air; may we not suppose that the subject is, in this particular, a little anticipated, which is no uncommon case in the sacred writings? The generality of expositors, however, interpret the passage of those "dark waters, compacted into thick clouds of the "skies," which the Almighty is elsewhere said to make the "secret place or chamber" of his residence, and a kind of "footstool" to his throne. Ps. xviii. 9. 11. And thus, indeed, the former part of our verse is plainly and immediately connected with what follows; "who maketh the clouds his

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"chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the "wind." How astonishingly magnificent and tremendous is the idea which these words convey to us, of the great King riding upon the heavens, encompassed with clouds and darkness, attended by the lightnings, those ready executioners of his vengeance, and causing the world to resound and tremble at the thunder of his power, and the noise of his chariot wheels! By these ensigns of royalty, these emblems of omnipotence, and instruments of his displeasure, doth Jehovah manifest his presence, when he visiteth rebellious man, to make him own and adore his neglected and insulted Lord. See and compare Ps. xviii. 10. and the context.

4. *Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.*

From the manner in which these words are introduced, and the place where they stand, one should conceive the meaning of them to be, that God employeth the elements of air and fire, the winds, רוחות, and the lightnings, as his messengers, מלאכיו, and ministers, to execute his commands upon the earth *. But the apostle, Heb. i. 7. informeth us, that they have a further reference to immaterial angels; either because those angels often appeared in the likeness, or because they were endued with the properties, of "wind and flame." Intellectual beings of the highest order in the realms above, are as ready to fulfil the word of Jehovah, as are the elements of this lower world. Both teach a lesson of obedience

* In the French translation it is—"Who maketh the winds "his angels, the flaming fire his ministers."

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to the sons of men; to those of them more especially, who are appointed "angels" of the churches, and "ministers" of Christ.

5. Who *laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.*

In the original it is, "Who hath founded the "earth upon its bases." The formation of this globe on which we tread, is a wonderful instance of divine wisdom and power, whether we consider the manner in which the parts of it are put and kept together, or its suspension in the circumambient fluid, which, as some philosophers suppose, by pressing upon it on every side, forms so many columns, as it were, to support, and keep it balanced. The words, "that it should not be removed for ever," do by no means imply, that the earth is stationary, or that it is eternal; but only thus much, that it is so constructed, as to answer the end, and to last the time for which it was created and intended. It shall continue the same in itself, and with relation to other bodies, neither altering its shape, nor changing its course, till the day appointed for its dissolution; after which, as there are to be "new heavens," so will there also be a "new earth."

6. *Thou coveredst it with the deep, as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.* 7. *At thy rebuke they fled: at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.* 8. *They go,* or, *went, up by the mountains: they go,* or, *went, down by the valleys, unto the place which thou hast founded for them.* 9. *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over: that they turn not again to cover the earth.*

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Most interpreters suppose this to be a description of the situation of things, and of what was effected by the power of God, on the third day of the creation, when he said, "Let the waters be gathered "together into one place, and let the dry land ap-"pear; and it was so." Indeed, the process at the creation was so exactly similar to that at the deluge, with regard to the circumstances here mentioned, that it matters not to which we apply the beautiful and truly poetical passage before us. In both cases, the earth was covered with the waters, as with a garment, in every part; in both cases, they fled at the Almighty word, like the scattered remains of a routed army; from the heights of mountains, whither they had ascended, they sunk down into the valleys; from the valleys they retired to the bed of the ocean, and a part of them descended from thence into the great deep that lieth beneath. Bounds were set them, beyond which they should never pass, to overwhelm us any more for ever. And the experience of 4000 years hath taught us, that where the Creator hath laid his commands, plain sand is a sufficient barrier. Thus the church hath been delivered from her spiritual enemies; and she hath a promise, on which she may with full confidence rely, that "the gates of hell "shall never prevail against her."

10. *He sendeth the springs into the valleys,* which *run among the hills.* 11. *They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst.*

The waters of the sea are not only prevented from destroying the earth, but, by a wonderful machinery, are rendered the means of preserving every

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living thing which moveth thereon. Partly ascending from the great depth through the strata of the earth, partly exhaled in vapour from the surface of the ocean into the air, and from thence falling in rain, especially on the tops and by the sides of mountains, they break forth in fresh springs, having left their salts behind them; they trickle through the valleys, between the hills, receiving new supplies as they go; they become large rivers, and after watering, by their innumerable turnings and windings, immense tracts of country, they return to the place from whence they came. Thus every animal hath an opportunity of quenching that thirst, which must otherwise soon put a period to its existence. The "wild "asses" are particularly mentioned, because they live in remote and sandy deserts; yet even such creatures, in such places, are by the God of nature taught the way to the waters; insomuch that the parched traveller, when in search of a fountain, findeth them to be the best guides in the world, and needeth only to observe and follow the herds of them descending to the streams. In the spiritual system, or new creation, there are wells of salvation, living springs, waters of comfort, of which all nations, even the most savage and barbarous, are invited to come and drink freely. They flow among the churches; they descend into the hearts of the lowly; and they refresh us in the passage through the wilderness: for even there "do waters break out, "and streams in the desert." Isa. xxxv. 6.

12. *By them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation,* which *sing among the branches.*

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"By them," that is, by "springs of water," in the "valleys," the birds delight to have their habitations, and to sing amidst the verdant branches, which conceal them from our sight. "The music of "birds," as one hath well observed, "was the first "song of thanksgiving which was offered on earth "before man was formed. All their sounds are dif-"ferent, but all harmonious, and all together compose "a choir which we cannot imitate *." If these little choristers of the air, when refreshed by the streams near which they dwell, express their gratitude by chanting, in their way, the praises of their Maker and Preserver, how ought Christians to blush, who, besides the comforts and conveniences of this world, are indulged with copious draughts of the water of eternal life, if, for so great blessings, they pay not their tribute of thanksgiving, and sing not unto the Lord the songs of Sion! "He that at mid-"night, when the very labourer sleeps securely, "should hear, as I have often done, the clear airs, "the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, "the doubling and redoubling, of the nightingale's "voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints "in heaven, when thou affordest bad men such "music upon earth!" Walton's Complete Angler, p. 9.

13. *He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.* 14.

* Wesley's Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation, I. 149.

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He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15. *And wine* that *maketh glad the heart of man,* and *oil to make* his *face to shine, and bread,* which *strengtheneth man's heart.*

The fertility of the earth is owing to God, who for that purpose "watereth" it, מעליותיו, "from his "chambers," whether the word hath a reference to the clouds above, or the depths below, for both are concerned in the operation. Hence all the glory and beauty of the vegetable world; hence the grass, which nourisheth the cattle, that they may nourish the human race; hence the green herb, for food and for medicine; hence fields covered with corn, for the support of life; hence vines and olive-trees laden with fruits, whose juices exhilarate the heart, and brighten the countenance. Nor let us forget the spiritual benedictions corresponding to these external ones; the fruitfulness of the church through grace, the bread of everlasting life, the cup of salvation, and the oil of gladness.

16. *The trees of the* LORD *are full* of sap; *the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.*

The whole earth is a garden, planted by the hand, and watered by the care, of Jehovah. But in a more especial manner is his glory set forth by the lofty and magnificent cedars, which, growing wild on the mountain and in the forest, owe nothing to the skill and industry of man. The moisture of the earth, rarefied by the heat of the sun, enters their roots, ascends in their tubes, and by due degrees expands and increases them, till they arrive at their growth.

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God hath also another garden, in which there are other trees of his planting, called by Isaiah, ch. lxi. 3. "trees of righteousness." These are his faithful servants, who, through the Spirit which is given unto them, become eminent and steady in goodness; their examples are fragrant, and their charity diffusive.

17. *Where the birds make their nests:* as for *the stork, the fir-trees* are *her house.*

Most admirable is that wisdom and understanding, which the Creator hath imparted to the birds of the air, whereby they distinguish times and seasons, choose the properest places, construct their nests with an art and exactness unattainable by man, and secure and provide for their young. "Is it for the birds, O "Lord, who have no knowledge thereof, that thou "hast joined together so many miracles? Is it for "the men who give no attention to them? Is it for "those who admire them, without thinking of thee? "Rather is it not thy design, by all these wonders, "to call us to thyself? to make us sensible of thy "wisdom, and fill us with confidence in thy bounty, "who watchest so carefully over these inconsider-"able creatures, two of which are sold for a far-"thing *?"

18. *The high hills* are *a refuge for the wild goats,* and *the rocks for the conies.*

The same force of what we call *instinct* prevails in terrestrial animals, and directs them to places of refuge, where they may be safe from their enemies. Thus the wild goats climb with ease to the tops and

* Wesley, as above.

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crags of mountains, where they deposit their young. And thus animals of another kind, which are more defenceless than the goats, and not able to climb like them, have yet a way of intrenching themselves, in a situation perfectly impregnable, among the rocks*; we find them, on that account, numbered by Solomon among the "four" kinds of animals, which, though "little upon the earth, are exceeding wise. "The שפנים are but a feeble folk, yet make they "their houses in the rocks:" Prov. xxx. 26. They who in themselves are "feeble" and helpless, should look out betimes for a mountain of refuge, and a rock of safety.

19. *He appointeth the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.*

From a survey of the works of God upon earth, the Psalmist proceedeth to extol that divine wisdom which is manifested in the motions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and in the grateful vicissitude of day and night occasioned thereby. A beautiful passage in the book of Ecclesiasticus will, perhaps, be the best comment on the former part of this verse: "He made the moon to serve in her season, for a "declaration of times, and a sign to the world. "From the moon is the sign of feasts, a light that "decreaseth in her perfection. The month is called "after her name, increasing wonderfully in her "changing, being an instrument of the armies

* It is uncertain what species of animals is here intended by the word שפנים. But it is enough for our purpose, that they are creatures remarkable for securing themselves in the manner here mentioned.

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"above, shining in the firmament of heaven; the "beauty of heaven, the glory of the stars, an orna-"ment giving light in the highest places of the "Lord:" ch. xlii. 6. The latter part of the verse expresseth the obedience of the "sun," or "solar "light," to the law of its Creator; it seemeth to "know" the exact time of its coming on, and going off, and fulfilleth the course prescribed to it, without the least deviation. O that we who are endowed with sense and reason, could in like manner fulfil our course; and that God's will were "done on "earth," as it is even "in" this lower and material "heaven!"

20. *Thou makest darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.* 21. *The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.*

Night and darkness invite the wild beasts of the forest and desert from their dens and recesses, to "seek" the "prey" allotted them by the providence of that God who feedeth the young lions, as well as the young ravens, when hunger enforceth them, as it were, to call upon him. Thus, when a nation hath filled up the measure of its iniquities, the Sun of Righteousness knoweth the time of his departure from it; the light of the Gospel is darkened, and a horrible night succeeds: the executioners of vengeance are in motion, and a commission from above is given them to seize upon the prey.

22. *The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.* 23. *Man*

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goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening.

At the return of day, the sons of ravage retire, and sculk away to their several hiding-places, that man, the lord of the creation, may arise, and perform, unmolested, the task which his Maker hath appointed him. When the light of truth and righteousness shineth, error and iniquity fly away before it, and the "roaring" lion himself departeth for a time. Then the Christian goeth forth to the work of his salvation, and to his labour of love, until the evening of old age warns him to prepare for his last repose, in faith of a joyful resurrection.

24. *O* LORD, *how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.*

Transported with a survey of the wonders which present themselves in heaven above, and on earth below, the Psalmist breaks forth into an exclamation (and what heart hath not already anticipated him?) on the variety and magnificence, the harmony and proportion, of the works of God, in this outward, and visible, and perishable world. What then are the miracles of grace and glory? What are those invisible and eternal things, which God hath prepared for them that love him, in another and a better world, and of which the things visible and temporary are no more than shadows? Admitted to that place, where we shall at once be indulged with a view of all the divine dispensations, and of that beatitude in which they terminate, shall we not, with angels and arch-

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angels, cry out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy "works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; "heaven and earth are full of thy riches, and of "thy glory!"

25. So is *this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts*, or, *living creatures*. 26. *There go the ships*; there is *that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein*.

There is not in all nature a more august and striking object than the ocean. Its inhabitants are as numerous as those upon the land, nor is the wisdom and the power of the Creator less displayed, perhaps, in their formation and preservation, from the smallest fish that swims, to the enormous tyrant of the deep, the leviathan himself. By means of navigation, Providence hath opened a communication between the most distant parts of the globe; the largest solid bodies are wafted, with incredible swiftness, upon one fluid, by the impulse of another, and seas join the countries which they appear to divide. In the ocean we behold an emblem of the world; under a smooth deceitful surface it conceals dangerous rocks, and devouring monsters; its waves are ever restless, and oftentimes it is all over storm and tempest, threatening to overwhelm the helpless, despairing mariner, in a moment; such is the voyage we all have to make, ere we can reach the desired haven, and attain that happy clime, where, as we are told, there is "no more SEA." Rev. xxi. 1.

27. *These wait all upon thee: that thou mayst give them their meet in due season*. 28. That *thou*

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givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

In various ways hath God provided food for the support of all living creatures, and directed them to seek, and to find it. How pleasing a speculation is it, to consider the whole family of air, earth, and sea, as "waiting upon" the Father and Lord of all things expecting when he should "open his hand," and distribute to each member his "portion of meat "in due season!" The case is the same with regard to beings intellectual and spiritual, of which is composed the church and family of Christ in heaven and earth; these wait all upon HIM, by whom Jehovah hath opened the hand of mercy, and abundantly supplied all our needs, through the riches of his grace.

29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

When God, in the season of winter, seemeth to hide his face, and to have withdrawn his beneficent influences, we hear the cries of the creation in distress; if he recall the breath of life from any creature, to which he had communicated it, that creature presently ceaseth to be what it was; sense and motion are at an end; the form and figure of it perish; and it is resolved into its original dust. But again he exerteth his quickening power, and, lo, fresh generations of animals are produced; fresh crops of vegetables shoot forth to nourish them; and there is

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a renovation of universal nature. The presence of God, in like manner, is the life, his absence is the death, of the soul. If he withdraw his grace, we perish everlastingly; but when he "sendeth forth "his Spirit," as he did on the day of Pentecost, "old "things pass away, and all things become new;" the winter is over, and spring succeeds in its place. Nay, the hour is coming, when, through the same Spirit, he shall also quicken our mortal bodies, and thus, in a more evident and wonderful manner, "re- "new the face of the earth."

31. *The glory of the* LORD *shall endure for ever: the* LORD *shall rejoice in his works.* 32. *He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*

Such being the works of God, so manifold and so marvellous, the Prophet foretelleth, that his "glo- "ry," displayed and declared by the same, should "endure for ever;" that creatures would never be wanting, to give him the praise and honour due unto him; insomuch that, graciously accepting this their tribute, and pleased to find a proper return made him, Jehovah should, as at the first creation, acquiesce and rejoice in all his works and dispensations. In the mean time, let the unruly and disobedient reflect upon the greatness of his power, and the terrors of his vengeance, who with a look can shake the earth, and with a touch can fire the mountains, as when he once descended on Sinai.

33. *I will sing unto the* LORD *as long as I live: I will sing praises unto my God, while I have my*

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being. 34. *My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the* LORD.

And who, O divine Psalmist, will not "sing" with thee, that hath an understanding to apprehend, and a tongue to celebrate, the works of his Maker and Redeemer? To whom will not thy heavenly meditations be sweet as honey, fragrant as the breath of spring, pleasant and cheering as the fruit of the vine? Who doth not long to partake of thy spiritual joy, and holy gladness?

35. *Let the sinners*, or, *the sinners shall, be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked*, or, *the wicked shall, be no more. Bless thou the* LORD, *O my soul. Praise ye the* LORD.

"The sinners," and "the wicked," are they of whom it is elsewhere said, that they "consider not "the works of Jehovah, nor regard the operations "of his hands," to give him praise and glory for them. These shall one day experience the power of that God, whose wisdom and goodness they would never acknowledge. They shall be "consumed," and "perish from the presence of the Lord, and "from the glory of his power, when he ariseth to "shake terribly the earth." The Psalmist, therefore, endeth as he began; "Bless THOU the LORD, "O my soul;" adding, by way of exhortation to us, and to all the world, "Praise ye the LORD." Let us, then, with the "four and twenty elders, fall down "before him that sitteth upon the throne, and wor-"ship him that liveth for ever and ever, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and

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"honour, and power; for thou hast created all "things, and for thy pleasure they are and were "created." Rev. iv. 10, 11.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CV.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, the first part of it at least, to verse 15. we know, from 1 Chron. xvi. to have been composed by David, and given out on occasion of his placing the ark of God in Sion. It containeth, 1—8. an exhortation to praise Jehovah for his works of mercy and power, wrought in favour of Israel. 9—44. These are traced from their source, namely, the covenant made with Abraham, through the patriarchal history, to the deliverance of the nation from the Egyptians, and its settlement in Canaan; the end of all which, 45. is declared to have been, that God might have a people to serve him. The same is true of our redemption by Jesus Christ, which was the grand subject of the promise made to Abraham, and of which the temporal mercies, vouchsafed to the patriarchs and their posterity, were so many pledges and figures.

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1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, *call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people.*

God, who formerly resided in mount Sion, vouchsafing his presence in a tabernacle made with hands, hath since blessed the church with his appearance in the flesh; and we Christians are bound to "make "known his deeds," and the mercies which he hath wrought for us, "among the people;" that so all the world may know him, and love him, and partake of his salvation.

2. *Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.*

Music and conversation are two things, by which the mind of man receiveth much good, or a great deal of harm. They who make "Jehovah" and his "wondrous works" the subjects of both, enjoy a heaven upon earth. And they who do in reality love their Saviour, will always find themselves inclined to "sing to him," and to "talk of him."

3. *Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the* LORD.

In whom should the redeemed "glory," exult, and triumph, but in their Redeemer, who hath made himself one with them, that they may be one with him? They who "seek" the Lord Jesus by prayer, should do it with a cheerful and joyous heart, because better it is to "seek" him, than to find all things else; and the soul that is brought to seek him will soon exchange the galling cares, and tormenting desires of the world, for the light yoke and easy burden of her Saviour, in whom she will find rest, and peace, and comfort Therefore,

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4. Seek the LORD *and his strength; seek his face evermore.*

By faith we find our Redeemer in this life, and experience the power and comfort of his grace; but hope and love still seek, and wish, and aspire after the sight and enjoyment of him in heaven, whither he is ascended.

5. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgements of his mouth: 6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

As an encouragement to "seek Jehovah evermore," "the seed of Abraham and the children of Jacob" are exhorted to bear in mind the marvellous works "which he had done" for them from the beginning, to protect and deliver them, as also "the judge-"ments of his mouth," whether by this phrase we understand the righteous laws given to his people, or the denunciations and executions of vengeance against their enemies. But, alas! "the seed of "Abraham" kept not the faith of their great progenitor; "the children of Jacob" have forfeited the blessing which their father obtained. We Gentiles have been, for a long season, the adopted "seed of "Abraham," and have inherited the benediction of "Jacob." Let us not forget the "marvellous works" of God in Christ, and the "judgements of his "mouth."

7. He is the LORD *our God, his judgements are in all the earth.*

If Jehovah were the "God" of Israel, on account of what, in covenant, he promised and performed

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for them, he is now the God of us all, on account of what he promised and hath performed in Christ Jesus for them and for us. If, when he settled Israel in Canaan, "his judgements" were manifested to "all the earth," were they not manifested also when the Christian church was established, and the idolatrous powers of the world were overthrown by the Gospel?

8. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.* 9. *Which* covenant *he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac:* 10. *And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,* and *to Israel for an everlasting covenant:* 11. *Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.*

Upon bringing the ark to mount Sion, David teacheth Israel to bless and praise God for his having "remembered his covenant," made with an "oath" to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would, in due time, settle his people in the land of Canaan. Now, it is very observable, that in the hymn uttered by Zacharias, the father of St. John the Baptist, on the subject of our redemption by Christ, thanks are given to the Lord God of Israel, because he had "remembered his holy covenant, and performed the oath which he sware, to "our forefather Abraham." And what was that? Why, "that we being delivered out of the hand of "our enemies, should serve him without fear, in "holiness and righteousness." But when, or where did God promise any such thing to Abraham, except when he told him, that "his seed should be in bond-

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"age four hundred years," but that "the nation," which detained them in bondage, should afterwards be "judged," and that they should be "brought "out," and come to "Canaan," Gen. xv. 13. where they were to "serve" him? The case seems to be this: Zacharias, under the immediate influence and direction of the Holy Spirit, tranfers the language of the old dispensation to the affairs of the new one; he celebrates the redemption of the world, by Christ, from sin and death, in words which literally describe the redemption of Israel from Egypt by Moses; to teach us, that we should regard one as a sacramental pledge and figure of the other; that there is another bondage, in which the people of God are held; another Moses, who is to deliver them; another land of promise and of rest, where they are to be settled. This the Hebrews might have known, as St. Paul tells them, Heb. iv. from a passage in the xcvth Psalm, where, long after they had been in possession of Canaan, David speaks of another "day" of probation, and another "rest." The Jews have since had a melancholy proof of the same thing, by being dispossessed of that earthly inheritance, which they falsely deemed to have been perpetual, and vainly regarded as the end of all the promises, made to a "thousand generations," that is (a definite number being put for an indefinite), to them, and to us, and to "as many as the Lord our God shall call," while the world shall last.

12. *When they were* but *a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.* 13. *When they*

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went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people.

How wonderful was the display of God's wisdom and power, in his choosing a single family, and that a small one, the members of which were literally "strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" in his promising to that family, in those circumstances, a large and fertile country, where the thrones of many princes were then firmly established; and, lastly, in his putting them into actual possession of it, at the time appointed! Thus the family of the holy Jesus was at first, but small; "the members of it were "a few, yea, a very few;" they were sojourners in a land not theirs; "they went from one nation to an-"other;" nay, they were accounted the "refuse of "the world, and the offscouring of all things." But, "Fear not, little flock," saith he unto them, "for "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the "kingdom:" Luke xii. 32. Let us view Israel brought into Canaan, nor doubt but that believers shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, and succeed to the thrones of apostate angels.

14. *He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea he reproved kings for their sakes;* 15. Saying, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*

The patriarchs, during their peregrinations, were often in imminent danger; as Abraham on account of Sarah; Gen. xx. Isaac, in a similar case; Gen. xxvi. Jacob from Laban; Gen xxxi. and from his brother Esau; Gen. xxxiii. Yet, destitute as they were of earthly help, the mightiest kings could

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not hurt them. Their "ways pleased the Lord, and "he made even their enemies to be at peace with "them." Prov. xvi. 7. They were the typical "prophets, and Messiahs, or Christs*," of Jehovah; and kings were forbidden to lift up a hand against them. How doth the same kind Providence watch over the body and the members of the true CHRIST; how often hath it interposed to protect and preserve them from the powers of the world.

16. *Moreover he called for a famine upon the land; he brake the whole staff of bread.*

When Jacob had escaped other perils, we find him and his family likely to perish with hunger: Gen. xlii. "Famine" is here finely represented as a servant, ready to come and go, at the "call" and command of God; for calamities, whether public or private, are the messengers of divine justice. "Bread" is the "staff" which supports life; when that staff is "broken," the body fails, and sinks to the earth. The word of God is the staff of spiritual life, the food and support of the soul; and the sorest of Heaven's judgements is that mentioned by the prophet Amos, ch. viii. 11. "Behold, the days come, saith the

* Ideo autem Christi sive Uncti dicuntur, quod essent et sacerdotes et reges: summâ quippe potestate præditi, nullique obnoxii. Hinc fœdera æquo jure pacta cum regibus: hinc bella suscepta, et quidem nutu suo, auspiciis, ut aiunt, suis. Gen. xiv. 21. Hinc Hethæi ad Abrahamum: "Audi nos, Domine: Princeps Dei es "apud nos:" Ibid. xxiii. 6. nemini obnoxius, nisi Deo. Quo jure Isaacus et Jacobus usi sunt: Gen. xxvi. &c. Ad hæc prophetæ erant: ut hic, et Gen. xx. 7. Quos omnes titulos unum Christi nomen complectitur. Christi autem dicuntur, in typo Christi ipsius ab eis orituri. BOSSUET.

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"Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but "of hearing the words of the LORD." Such a famine was sore in all lands, when Christ made his appearance in the flesh; whose advent, with the blessed effects of it, is wonderfully shadowed forth in the prophetical history of the patriarch Joseph.

17. *He sent a man before them,* even *Joseph* who *was sold for a servant;* 18. *Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron.*

Joseph and Jesus were both envied, hated, and sold by their brethren; both suffered by a false accusation; the former was laid in irons, the latter crucified, and confined in the prison of the grave, fast bound with the bands of death. The wickedness of man, in working its own will, did unwittingly accomplish the counsels of God. "As for you," saith Joseph to his brethren, Gen. l. 20. "ye thought "evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to "bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much peo- "ple alive." And how doth St. Peter address the brethren of that other Joseph? "Him, being de- "livered by the determinate counsel and foreknow- "ledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands "have crucified and slain—And, now brethren, I "wot that through ignorance ye did it—But those "things which God before had showed by the mouth "of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he "hath so fulfilled." Acts ii. 23. and iii. 17.

19. *Until the time that his word came: the word of the* LORD *tried him.*

Joseph continued in prison, "until the time that

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"his word, or cause, דברו, came" before the king, and was "known," according to our old translation; or, "until his word," or prediction concerning the chief butler's promotion "came to pass;" for this was the means of Joseph's enlargement and justification; since a person, guilty of the crime with which he stood charged, would not have been inspired to foretel future events. "Can we find," said Pharaoh, "such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of "God is?" Gen. xli. 38. In the mean time, the "word," commandment, or decree, אמרת, "of the "LORD tried him" in the furnace of affliction, there refining and preparing him for his approaching exaltation to glory and honour. Thus was there a time appointed for the abode of Jesus in the grave, at the expiration of which, all his promises and predictions were fulfilled: he came forth, "made per-"fect through sufferings," and ready to "enter into "his glory."

20. *The king sent and loosed him;* even *the ruler of the people, and let him go free.* 21. *He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance;* 22. *To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom.*

The circumstances of Joseph's advancement, here alluded to, are related, Gen. xli. &c. Those of our Lord's resurrection and glorification afford a marvellous parallel. At the determined hour, "The "king" of heaven "sent" his angel, "and loosed "him" from the bands of death; "the Ruler of the "world let him go free" from the penalty which he had undertaken to pay, and had now fully paid

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"He made him Lord of his house, the church, and "Ruler of all his substance" in heaven and in earth, that he might, by his holy discipline, "bind princes "at his pleasure," and by his Gospel "teach" true "wisdom" to the "senators" and politicians of the world; he was clothed with the robes of majesty, he was adorned with all the ensigns of royalty, and to him it was ordained that "every knee should "bow." The storehouses of grace and salvation were opened; the nations came to be supplied by him with the bread of life; and we look for that happy day when the Jews shall do the same, and "Joseph shall be made known to his brethren."

23. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. 25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilely with his servants.

The Psalmist now exhibiteth to our view a fresh scene of tribulation and affliction, which occasioned repeated mercies, and a new deliverance. Israel, by means of Joseph, obtained an establishment in Egypt. But in process of time, the increase and prosperity of Israel, excited the envy and jealousy of Egypt, and brought on a persecution. The kindness and love of God to his people "turned the hearts" of the Egyptians against them, and caused animosity to take place of friendship. A king arose who knew not Joseph, and measures were concerted to keep the Hebrews under; a royal edict was issued to prevent their increase, by putting the males to death; and the generation then in being was reduced to a

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state of the most abject servitude and cruel bondage. Such usage the people of God have often experienced from the world, at the instigation of him, who in Scripture is styled, "the prince of this "world."

26. *He sent Moses his servant,* and *Aaron whom he had chosen.* 27. *They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.*

When the tyranny and oppression of Pharaoh were at the highest, and Israel cried unto Jehovah because of the bondage, he remembered his promise to Abraham, and sent Moses, with Aaron, to effect that mighty deliverance, which was to be the grand pledge and figure of our salvation by Jesus Christ. Of him Moses prophesied, when he said, "A pro-"phet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you "of your brethren, LIKE UNTO ME." Deut. xviii. 15. cited and applied Acts iii. 22. He came to rescue mankind from a spiritual bondage, and to deliver all who were "oppressed by the devil:" Acts x. 38. he came at a time when that oppression was most grievous among Jews and Gentiles: his birth was signalized by an order from another Pharaoh, to slay the infants; and Egypt afforded him a refuge from the tyrant's fury: he wrought innumerable "signs and wonders;" but they were all signs of mercy, and wonders of love. Those of terror and vengeance were reserved for a future advent, foreshowed in the destruction of Jerusalem.

28. *He sent darkness, and made it dark: and they rebelled not against the word:* or, *and did they not still rebel against his word?* 29. *He turned their*

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waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30. *Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.* 31. *He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies,* Heb. *a mixture came,* and *lice in all their coasts.* 32. *He gave them hail for rain,* and *flaming fire in their land.* 33. *He smote their vines also, and fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.* 34. *He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number;* 35. *And did eat up all the herbs in their land; and devoured the fruit of their ground.* 36. *He smote also the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength.*

Who can behold this army of divine judgements thus passing in dreadful array before him, without trembling very exceedingly at that power, which is able to send them, singly, or in conjunction, upon a sinful land? Who can reflect upon their number and variety, without adoring that goodness, patience, and long suffering, which tried so many different methods, and wanted so long, to lead the offenders to repentance? For more particulars see the comment on Ps. lxxviii. 43—51.

37. *He brought them,* i. e. the people of Israel, *forth also with silver and gold: and* there was *not one feeble* person *among their tribes.* 38. *Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.*

The Israelites not only came forth from Egypt, but came forth laden with the spoils of their enemies, which they were commanded to take, by him who is the absolute Lord of all property, and who,

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as a righteous judge, did thus award to his people the wages due to their incredible labours, the Egyptians being now willing and ready to furnish them with any thing required, in order to dismiss them. "The Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that "they might send them out of the land in haste: for "they said, We be all dead men." Exod. xii. 33. And what was very extraordinary, among such a number of men, women, children, and cattle, nothing was weak and "feeble," nothing unable to perform the journey. The order was, that "not a "hoof should be left behind;" Exod. x. 26. and he who commanded gave strength to obey. Thou hast also enjoined us, thy servants, O Lord, to quit Egypt, and march for Canaan; let thy grace invigorate us, from time to time, that so we faint not by the way.

39. *He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.* 40. The people *asked, and he brought quails; and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.* 41. *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out: they ran in the dry places* like *a river.*

"Brethren, I would not that ye should be ig-"norant how that all our fathers were under the "cloud; and were all baptized unto Moses in the "cloud; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; "and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed "them; and that Rock was CHRIST." 1 Cor. x. 1—4. In our passage through this wilderness of life, over barren sands, and amidst fiery serpents, be thou, blessed Lord, our guide and our guard; pro-

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tected by thy providence, supported by thy word, and refreshed by thy Spirit, lead us even where, and in what manner, it shall seem good to thee; only do not thou forsake us, and we ask no more.

42. *For he remembered his holy promise*, and *Abraham his servant.* 43. *And he brought forth his people with joy* and *his chosen with gladness.*

The same God hath since "remembered again his "promise to Abraham;" he hath visited his people, and redeemed them from the bondage of sin, under the tyranny of Satan; which redemption they daily celebrate in the church, with "joy and gladness," waiting for their final deliverance from death and the grave, when they are to sing in heaven "the song of "Moses and of the Lamb." Rev. xv. 3.

44. *And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;* 45. *That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the* LORD.

It was not, therefore, intended that the Israelites should regard Canaan as their paradise, and look no farther; but that, being rescued from their enemies, and settled in peace and plenty, they should improve the opportunity, thereby afforded them, of serving the Lord their God, and of securing to themselves, through the obedience of faith, an inheritance in "a better country, that is to say, an "heavenly." And let all the children of faithful Abraham, whose lot hath fallen in "a land flowing "with milk and honey" upon earth, reflect, that God hath given them riches, and the leisure which riches procure, not for the purpose of indulging and

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corrupting themselves and others, but that they may glorify him, benefit their neighbours, and save their own souls; "that they may observe his statutes, and "keep his laws." Israel was delivered by Moses, and the church redeemed by Christ, that God might "purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good "works." Tit. ii. 14.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVI.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist here again commemorates the divine benefits, upbraiding withal the ingratitude of those who received them. 1, 2. He exhorteth men to the praise of Jehovah; 3—5. proclaimeth the blessedness, and longeth for the felicity of the saints; 6. confesseth the sins of Israel, and giveth a detail of their rebellions; 7—12. at the Red Sea; 13—15. when they lusted for flesh in the wilderness; 16—18. in the matter of Korah; 19—23. in that of the golden calf; 24—27. at the report of the spies; 28—31. in the affair of Baal-peor; 32, 33. at the waters of Meribah; 34—39. in not destroying idolatry, but being seduced by it. 40—46. God's frequent judgements, and as frequent mercies, are related; 47. a prayer is made, that Jehovah would gather Israel from among the

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Heathen, which shows the Psalm to have been written during some captivity or dispersion. The last verse contains an act of blessing and praise.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, *for* he is *good, for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

In the person of a penitent nation, the Prophet invites mankind to "give thanks unto Jehovah," for that "goodness" which preventeth us with blessings, and for that "mercy" which forgiveth our transgressions; that mercy which was shown to our forefathers upon their repentance, and will "ever," be shown, upon the same condition, to us and our posterity; that mercy which will bring sin and misery to an end, itself continuing eternal and unchangeable.

2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the* LORD? who *can show forth all his praise?*

But who is sufficient for a work that demandeth the tongues and harps of angels? "When you "glorify the Lord," saith the Son of Sirach, "exalt "him as much as you can; for even yet will he far "exceed; and when you exalt him, put forth all "your strength, and be not weary, for you can "never go far enough." Ecclus xliii. 30.

3. *Blessed* are *they that keep judgement;* and *he that doeth righteousness at all times.*

Next to angels, they are blessed and qualified to praise God with the voice, who glorify him in their lives; who having experienced in themselves the "mighty acts" of mercy, pardoning the guilt, and breaking the power of sin, are become the serv-

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ants of Jesus, and render to their Saviour "at all "times," in adversity no less than in prosperity, the due tribute of unfeigned love and obedience.

4. *Remember me, O* LORD, *with the favour* that thou bearest unto *thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.* 5. *That I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance.*

The Psalmist offereth a prayer for himself, or rather for the church of Israel, that she, with himself, might partake of such blessedness. The words might have a reference to a temporal restoration and felicity; but they certainly extend much farther, and form the most spiritual and heavenly petition that the devoutest Christian can prefer to the throne of grace. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour" which thou hast always shown to "thy people," in whom thou hast delighted from the foundation of the world, and on whom it is thy good pleasure to confer a glorious kingdom. "O visit me with thy salvation," with which so many patriarchs, prophets, and kings, have desired to be visited, the salvation of thy Christ, the justifier of all them that believe, and the rewarder of his saints: "that I may see the good of thy "chosen," their felicity in beholding thy countenance, and living for ever in thy presence; "that I may re-"joice in the gladness of thy nation," the unspeakable gladness of those who enter into the joy of their Lord; "and glory with thine inheritance," singing hallelujahs before thine everlasting throne, in the Jerusalem which is above. The Israelitish church, when in peace and tranquillity serving her God, and

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chanting the songs of Sion, afforded a very lively representation of this eternal felicity.

6. *We have sinned with our fathers: we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedly.*

They who have joined with the Prophet in his affectionate aspiration after the divine favour, may here learn the surest way to attain it; namely, by confessing their own sins, and those of their ancestors. "We have sinned with our fathers," that is, after their example of unbelief and disobedience, of which an account immediately followeth. The fathers' sins are often reflected in their children, and each new reflection, instead of being weaker, is stronger than the foregoing; as in the case of the Jews.

7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*

The Israelites did not profit, as they should have done, by the miracles wrought for them in Egypt; they increased not in the wisdom and knowledge of God their Saviour; but when they saw themselves pursued by Pharaoh, their faith failed, they murmured against Moses, and wished themselves again in the bondage from which they were just delivered: Exod. xiv. 10, &c. Thus, when the penitent findeth himself beset with difficulties and dangers; when he seeth before him that death unto sin, through which he must pass to a life of righteousness, while the devil and the world follow hard after him, to destroy or bring him back to a more cruel bondage, how apt

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is he to forget all that Christ hath done for him! Fear puts out the light of faith, and hides the prospect of the promised land; imagination recalls the former gratifications of sense; he is tempted to regret the desertion of Egypt, and to wish for a return to it again.

8. *Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake; that he might make his mighty power to be known.* 9. *He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.* 10. *And he saved them from the hand of him that hated* them, *and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.* 11. *And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.* 12. *Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.*

Comforted and encouraged by Moses, the armies of Israel advanced to the shore; and, lo, the waves, at the lifting up of the powerful rod, instantly parted, and, like so many well-disciplined troops, arranging themselves in two columns, disclosed a new and strange path, by which the people of God were conducted, in perfect security, to the opposite shore; when the waters, falling down, and reassuming their ancient habitation, overwhelmed the infidel host, and left not a man to carry the news to Egypt. Through all the difficulties and dangers of the Christian course, faith will ever find a way opened, by the power of Jesus, from sin to righteousness, and from death to life: the enemies of our salvation, how formidable soever, shall disappear, and be no more; and we

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shall sing, like Israel, a song of triumph to the Lord our God.

13. *They soon forgat his works,* Heb. *They made haste, they forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel.* 14. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.* 15. *And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their souls.*

Soon after the Israelites had experienced the power and goodness of Jehovah, at the Red Sea, we find them murmuring against him, Exod. xv. 24. They grew impatient, they looked upon themselves as forgotten, and given over to destruction. They loathed manna, and required flesh; flesh was sent them, on which they surfeited themselves; the wrath of God smote them, and many were carried off by a grievous plague: Numb. xi. 4. 33. Let us learn to wait God's time and counsel, for the supply of necessaries, much more of conveniences; remembering that he hath given us his Son, and therefore will not deny us such inferior corporeal blessings, as he foreseeth will really prove blessings to us. Let us be duly thankful for that "bread which cometh "down from heaven," cautious how we request the good things of this world, and strictly temperate in the use of them when given.

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp,* and *Aaron the saint of the* LORD. 17. *The earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.* 18. *And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked.*

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Moses and Aaron were the divinely appointed governors of Israel, in church and state. Envy and ambition led Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to accuse the former of tyranny, and the latter of priestcraft. Jehovah was appealed to, a day appointed, and a decision made. One body of the malcontents went down alive into the pit, another was consumed by fire from heaven: Numb. xvi. Let schismatics and rebels beware of that "pit," which is bottomless, and of that "fire," which shall never be quenched.

19. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.* 20. *Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.* 21. *They forgat God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt:* 22. *Wondrous works in the land of Ham,* and *terrible things by the Red Sea.*

While the terrible presence of God abode upon mount Sinai, and Moses was gone up thither to receive the law, even then, and there, "at Horeb," the people apostatized to the old favourite sin of idolatry, and persuaded Aaron to make them a "calf," or "ox," before which they prostrated themselves, acknowledging it, or the power represented by it, whatever that was, to have been the author of their deliverance from Egypt; Exod. xxxii.: "for as "to Moses, they knew not what was become of him," nor ever expected to see him any more. Thus they exchanged their "glory," the glory which had accompanied them in the mystic cloud, nay, which was then present before their eyes on the top of the mount, "for an image made like to a four-footed

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"beast," as it is said of the Heathen in their worst estate, Rom. i. 23. and thus they forgat Jehovah, who had wrought his works and wonders for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea. It is to be hoped, we shall never live to see a time, when the miracles of our Redemption shall be forgotten; when the return of Jesus Christ from heaven shall be despaired of; and when the people shall solicit their teachers to fabricate a new philosophical deity, for them to worship, instead of the God of their ancestors, to whom glory hath been ascribed, from generation to generation.

23. *Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy* them.

When we hear Jehovah saying to Moses, on account of his people's monstrous ingratitude, and atrocious wickedness, "Let me alone, that my wrath "may wax hot against them, and that I may con-"sume them, and I will make of thee a great na-"tion;" when we hear Moses, notwithstanding this, interceding for his countrymen, with the offended Majesty of heaven; urging to God the glory of his name, the relation in which he stood to Israel, the covenant he had made with their fathers; and if they must be cast off, desiring himself to perish with them; "if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, "blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou "hast written;" how we are astonished at an instance of such invincible fortitude, fervent piety, unadulterated patriotism, triumphant faith, and un-

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bounded charity! Once, and but once, was this instance exceeded, by Him, in whose name the intercession of Moses was made and accepted; who really taking upon himself the sins of his people, suffered the vengeance due to them; and who is now at the right hand of God interceding for us all. See Exod. xxxii. 10—14, and 32.

24. *Yea, they despised the pleasant land; they believed not his word;* 25. *But murmured in their tents,* and *hearkened not unto the voice of the* Lord. 26. *Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:* 27. *To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.*

The history here alluded to is contained in Numb. xiii. and xiv. The spies brought back a favourable account of the promised land and its productions, but communicated to the people those terrible apprehensions, with which themselves were possessed, concerning the power of the Anakims, and other inhabitants of Canaan. Infidelity presently discovered itself by its usual fruit, disobedience. They thought they should never be able to surmount all these difficulties, but should become a prey, with their wives and children, to the sword; and a return to Egypt was once more the cry of the camp of Israel. Therefore did Jehovah "lift up his hand against "them;" he declared, that none of the generation then in being, Joshua and Caleb only excepted, should enter into his rest, but that they should fall in the wilderness, without setting foot in that pleasant and most desirable land. Discomfiture and dis-

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persion were also threatened to their posterity, that is, if they should go on in the same spirit of rebellion, and fill up the measure of their fathers' iniquities; which they have since done, and are accordingly "overthrown among the nations, and scattered "among the lands" to this day. But do not thou suffer us, O LORD, to despise that "pleasant land," which thou designest to be the inheritance of thy saints; whatever obstructions may be thrown in our way, suffer us not, through sloth and cowardice, to "disbelieve thy word," to doubt the accomplishment of thy promises, or to "murmur" against thy dispensations.

28. *They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.* 29. *Thus they provoked* him *to anger with their inventions; and the plague brake in upon them.* 30. *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgement; and so the plague was stayed.* 31. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness, unto all generations for evermore.*

By Balaam's advice, Numb. xxxi. 16. the Moabites and Midianites sent their daughters among the people of Israel, who soon yielded to the temptation, and fornication ended in idolatry; nay, perhaps it might be a part of the Moabitish ritual; as we know it was among the religious services paid by the latter Heathens to some of their deities. By the "sacrifices "of the dead," may be meant sacrifices which were offered either to dead idols, or to men deified after death. To punish this apostasy, the wrath of Jehovah went forth, and 24,000 perished by the plague,

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which at length ceased, when Phinehas had "exe-
"cuted judgement" upon Zimri and Cosbi, who seemed, indeed, to call aloud for it, by indulging their lawless passions in the midst of so grievous a calamity, at a time when the whole congregation were humbling themselves before God at the door of the tabernacle. "Wherefore," saith God, "be-
"hold I give unto him my covenant of peace; and
"he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the
"covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he
"was zealous for his God, and made an atonement
"for the children of Israel:" Numb. xxv. 12. It is most probable, as Dr. Hammond observes, that Phinehas, being the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was one of the judges of Israel; and if so, he had a clear commission for what he did, from Moses, who had "said to the judges of Israel, Slay
"ye every one his man, that were joined to Baal-
"peor:" Numb. xxv. 5. The case of Phinehas, therefore, is no precedent for uncommissioned zealots. In general we learn from this part of the sacred history, how accepsable to God is a well-timed zeal for his service; as also, how dangerous it is to converse too freely with those of the other sex, especially when they have been educated in a false religion, or in no religion at all.

32. *They angered* him *also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:* 33. *Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*

This instance of disobedience was, in point of time, prior to that mentioned in the preceding verses.

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It is related, Numb. xx. 2—13. The spirit of Moses, though he was the meekest man upon earth, was so exasperated and imbittered by continual murmurings and rebellions, that he is charged with "not having believed God, to sanctify him in the "eyes of the children of Israel;" and he was, on that account, denied the honour of bringing them into the land of promise. He had been commanded to smite the rock, that water might come forth. In anger he smote it twice, thus upbraiding the people: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out "of this rock?" He showed not that affiance in God, that disposition to glorify him before his people, which became him in the execution of his office. "The wrath of man" found admission, and that "worketh not the righteousness of God." Thou, blessed Jesus, art the only perfect pattern of patience and love; O grant to all, but above all, to the pastors of thy flock, a "spirit" not easy to be "provoked," and lips not hasty to "speak unadvisedly."

34. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the* LORD *commanded them:* 35. *But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.* 36. *And they served their idols; which were a snare unto them.*

When the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, it pleased God to extirpate the race, and Israel was commissioned to execute upon them the vengeance determined. But the conquerors suffered themselves frequently to be seduced into all the abominations of the conquered, and spared their idolatrous altars, till themselves came to bow down before them. Judg. ii.

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3, 3. The Canaanites, against whom we Christians militate, are our lusts, which, if they are spared and treated with, will prove "a snare" to us, and in time become our masters. Mercy shown to them is cruelty to ourselves, and will always be found so in the end.

37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils: 38. And shed innocent blood, even *the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.*

It is plain, that the "devils," mentioned in the former of these two verses, are "the idols of Ca-"naan," mentioned in the latter. The word translated "devils," is שדים, literally, "the pourers "forth;" by which it is highly probable, that the idolaters meant the great agents of nature, or the heavens, considered as giving rain, causing the earth to send out springs, and to put forth her increase, vegetables to yield and nourish their fruit, and animals to abound with milk, for the subsistence of their young *. Idolatry being a work of the devil, it is true, in fact, that what is offered to an idol, is offered to the devil; though the word, שדים, doth by no means imply it. We stand astonished, doubtless, at this horrid, barbarous, and unnatural impiety of offering children by fire to a Moloch: but how little is it considered, that children brought up in the ways of ignorance, error, vanity, folly, and vice,

* See the account given of the word by the learned and ingenious Mr. Parkhurst, in his excellent Hebrew-English Lexicon.

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are more effectually sacrificed to the great adversary of mankind!

39. *Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.* 40. *Therefore was the wrath of the* LORD *kindled against his people; insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.* 41. *And he gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them.* 42. *Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.* 43. *Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked* him *with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.* 44. *Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.* 45. *And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.* 46. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.*

This is an epitome of the history of the Israelites, from the time when they took possession of Canaan, downwards. Transgressions brought on chastisements; chastisements produced repentance; and repentance obtained mercy. For their last and grand rebellion against the Son of God, and their King Messiah, whom they murdered, the sore burden of Heaven's displeasure hath now rested upon the nation these seventeen hundred years; but their eyes are not yet opened; their hearts have not, hitherto, relented. How hath the "wrath of Jehovah been "kindled against his people, insomuch that he hath "abhorred his own inheritance!" How hath he "given them into the hand of the Heathen, and

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" caused them that hated them to rule over them !' How have " their enemies oppressed them ;" how have they been brought into subjection under their " hand ! Nevertheless, O Lord, regard their affliction, " when thou hearest their cry ;" grant them repentance first, and then pardon ; " remember for them " thy covenant ;" let them change their mind, and do thou " change thy purpose, according to the " multitude of thy mercies ; make them also to be " pitied of all those that have carried them captives ;" cause them, upon their conversion, to find favour in the eyes of the nations ; and do Thou, who hast so long been " a light to lighten the Gentiles," become once more " the glory of thy people Israel."

47. *Save us, O* LORD *our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name,* and *to triumph in thy praise.*

It appears from this verse, that the Psalm was written at a time when Israel was in captivity " among the Heathen." Such will be the petition of the Jews hereafter to him whom they crucified ; and such is now the petition of the Christian church, that the elect may be finally gathered together, and united in one congregation, " to give thanks unto the name, " and triumph for ever in the praises, of JESUS."

48. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting ; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the* LORD.

At all times, in all places, and by all persons, on earth and in heaven, in prosperity and adversity, peace or persecution, " the LORD God of Israel," the Saviour and Redeemer of his church, is to be

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"blessed;" nor can any situation exempt a believer from saying, "Amen, Hallelujah," that is, from blessing God, himself, and exciting others to do the same.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CVII.

ARGUMENT.

The redeemed of the Lord are exhorted in this Psalm, 1—3. to praise him for his goodness in redeeming, and gathering them from the four quarters of the world. Their danger and their deliverance are represented under the four striking images, 4—9. of travellers lost in a wilderness, but directed and conducted home; 10—16. of prisoners rescued from captivity; 17—22. of sick and dying men restored to health; 23—32. of mariners preserved in a storm at sea, and brought safe into port. 33—41. Some other instances of God's providence in the government of the world, and of the church, are adduced and insisted on, for, 42. the consolation of the righteous, and, 43. the instruction of all.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, *for* he is *good, for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 2. *Let the redeemed of the* LORD *say* so, *whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* 3. *And gathered them*

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out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Eternal mercy is the theme here proposed; and they who have tasted its sweets, are invited to join in setting forth its praises. The members of the Christian church are now, in the most proper and emphatical sense of the words, "the redeemed of "of Jehovah, whom he hath redeemed from the hand "of the enemy, and gathered them," by the Gospel, out of all lands, and from all the four quarters of the world, to form a church, and to supply the place of the apostate Jews; whose forefathers experienced, in type and shadow, the good things prepared for them and for us, in truth and substance. "Many," saith our Lord to the Jews, "shall come from the "east and from the west, and from the north, and "from the south, and shall sit down in the king-"dom of God—and ye yourselves shall be thrust "out:" Matt. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29. We, converted Gentiles, are the happy people; and we are taught in this Psalm to celebrate that mercy which made us so.

4. *They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in.* 5. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.* 6. *Then they cried unto the* LORD *in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.* 7. *And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*

The spiritual blessings of redemption are represented by the Psalmist under four exquisitely beauti-

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ful and expressive images; which images are themselves four especial acts of God's providential care and love, shown toward the bodies of men in the world; corresponding with as many works of grace, wrought on the souls of believers, in the church. The first of these pictures exhibiteth to our view a set of travellers lost in a pathless desert, and well nigh famished through want of necessary provisions. They make their distresses known by prayer to Jehovah, and, lo, he appears, as their guard, and their guide; he supplies all their necessities upon the journey, and conducts them in safety to their place of abode. Thus he dwelt with Israel of old, in their passage, through the waste and howling wilderness, from Egypt to Canaan. And thus he is ready to deal with us all. "The world," saith Lord Bolingbroke*, "is a great wilderness, wherein mankind "have wandered about from the creation—We are "not only passengers, or sojourners, but absolute "strangers at the first steps we make in it." We are so, indeed; and too often, through our own fault, continue such to the last; we find not the way which leads to heaven, nor, if we did find it, have we strength to travel in it, without the viaticum which cometh from thence, and which alone can bring us thither. Fervent and importunate prayer to the God of our salvation will procure, from above knowledge to dispel our ignorance, and grace to help our infirmities; the former will discover to us our

* Reflections on History, vol. i. p. 244, and 171.

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road; the latter will enable us to walk in it, and both together will carry us, in due time, to "the city of "our eternal habitation."

8. *O that* men *would praise the* LORD for *his goodness, and* for *his wonderful works to the children of men!* 9. *For he satisfieth the longing*, or, *thirsty, soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*

The former of these two verses is a chorus, repeated after the celebration of each of the four mercies here related. Literally it is, "Let them acknow-"ledge to Jehovah his mercy, and his wonders for "the children of Adam." And what can better deserve our acknowledgement, than the provision made for the bodies and souls of Christian travellers, in their way to that heavenly country and city, "where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; "for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne "shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living "fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all "tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 16.

10. *Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death,* being *bound in affliction and iron:* 11. *Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:* 12. *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and* there was *none to help.* 13. *Then they cried unto the* LORD *in their trouble,* and *he saved them out of their distresses.* 14. *He brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.* 15. *O that* men *would praise the* LORD for *his goodness, and* for

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his wonderful works to the children of men! 16. *For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.*

In this second piece of divine scenery, we behold a people groaning under all the miseries of captivity, deprived of light and liberty, chained down in horrid dungeons, and there expecting the day of execution. These calamities they are represented as having brought upon themselves by their rebellion against God, who takes this method of humbling them. It succeeds, and brings them upon their knees to Him who alone is able to deliver them. Moved by their cries, he exerts his power on their behalf, and frees them from the house of bondage. To a state of corporal servitude the Israelites, for their transgressions, were frequently reduced, and many times experienced, upon their repentance, the goodness of Jehovah in rescuing them from it. But the grand and universal captivity is that of sin and death; the grand and universal deliverance, for which all the redeemed of the Lord ought to praise his mercy, is that by Jesus Christ. Adam and all his posterity "rebelled against the words of God, and contemned "the counsel of the Most High." By so doing, they subjected themselves to a slavery the heaviest and bitterest of all others. The devil led them captive at his will, and set over them their own insatiable lusts and passions, as so many taskmasters, to afflict, and keep them under. By these the soul is confined so close in prison, and bound with so many chains, that it cannot get forth to do the will of God, even when that is made known to it. Of mankind in this state

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how truly may it be said, and how often in Scripture is it said, under these and the like figures, "They "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being "fast bound in misery, and bands stronger than "iron—He also brought down their heart through "heaviness, they fell down, and there was none to "help!" A sense of this his woful condition forces the sinner to "cry unto the Lord Jesus in his trou-"ble," and to say, "O wretched man that I am, "who shall deliver me from this body of death!" "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give "thanks unto thy name." And now his prayer is heard, the grace of Christ cometh to his assistance, and he is made "free indeed." His chains, like those of St. Peter, fall off at the word of his deliverer; he is "saved out of his distress;" he is brought "out of darkness and the shadow of death," into the glorious light and liberty of the sons of God. The joy consequent upon such a deliverance will be exceeded only by that which shall take place in the hearts, and be expressed by the voices of the redeemed, on the day when Christ shall accomplish the redemption of their bodies also, as he hath already effected that of his own, from the power of the grave; when he shall dash in pieces the brazen gates and adamantine bars of that prison-house, put an end for ever to the bondage of corruption, and lead captivity captive in the highest heavens.

17. *Fools, because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* 18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death.* 19. *Then they cry unto*

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the LORD *in their trouble,* and *he saveth them out of their distresses.* 20. *He sent his word and healed them, and delivered* them *from their destruction.* 21. *O that* men *would praise the* LORD for *his goodness, and* for *his wonderful works to the children of men!* 22. *And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.*

The recovery of men from sickness affords a third image of the benefits conferred on our nature, by the Redeemer. Sickness, as we are here informed, is the punishment of human folly and iniquity. When it is extreme, it deprives man of all relish and appetite for his food; nay, it makes him loathe and detest the very sight and smell of that which should nourish and support him; in which case, he must waste away, and soon "draw near to the gates of death." But from those dreadful gates the power of God can snatch us when we are just about to enter them. To an infirm and emaciated body he can restore health, strength, and beauty; for diseases are his ministers and messengers; they visit us at his command, and at his command they retire, and we recover again. The Israelites in the wilderness, "because of their "transgressions, and because of their iniquities, were "often afflicted" with a plague. But when they repented, and atonement was made, the plague ceased. They were stung by fiery serpents; but when they "cried unto Jehovah, he sent his word, and healed "them." "They were troubled," as the author of the book of Wisdom observes, "for a small season, "that they might be admonished, having a sign

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" of salvation to put them in remembrance of the " commandment of thy law. For he that turned " himself towards it, was not saved by the thing that " he saw, but by thee who art the Saviour of all." Wisdom xvi. 6, 7. Sentence of death ws passed upon Hezekiah; he already saw himself at " the gates of " the grave," and expected no more to " behold man " with the inhabitants of the world." Yet his prayer prevailed for a respite, and fifteen years were added to his life, Isa. xxxviii. Now the mind, by reason of sin, is not less subject to infirmities than the body. These infirmities reduce a man to a state of languor and listlessness; he finds himself incapable of action, indisposed for the reception of divine truths, without taste for knowledge, or inclination for virtue; he even nauseates the book of God, and the bread of heaven; and the life of faith is in great danger. But the case is not desperate, while there is breath enough left to call in, by prayer, the great Physician of spirits. The most inveterate malady gives place to his efficacious medicines; appetite revives, health returns, and the believer is reinstated in the vigour and beauty of holiness. Let all who have been thus " healed, and saved from destruction," either of body or soul, " acknowledge to Jehovah his mercy, " and his wonders wrought for the children of " Adam: let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanks- " giving, and declare his works with rejoicing."

23. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters:* 24. *These see the works of the* LORD, *and his wonders in the deep.* 25. *For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which*

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lifted up the waves thereof. 26. *They mount up to heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble.* 27. *They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end;* Heb. *all their wisdom,* or *skill, is swallowed up.* 28. *Then they cry unto the* LORD *in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.* 29. *He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.* 30. *Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.* 31. *O that* men *would praise the* LORD for *his goodness, and* for *his wonderful works to the children of men!* 32. *Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

The fourth similitude chosen to portray the dangers of our present state, and the goodness of God displayed in our salvation, is taken from that signal instance of the divine power and providence, the preservation of mariners in a storm at sea. The description which the Psalmist hath given us of such an event admitteth of no comment. Experience alone can illustrate its beauty, evince its truth, and point out the propriety of the circumstances which are selected to furnish us with a full and complete idea of the whole. Few of us, indeed, are ever likely to be in that terrible situation. But then we cannot help reflecting, that there is a ship, in which we are all embarked; there is a troubled sea, on which we all sail; there are storms, by which we are all frequently overtaken; and there is a haven, which we all desire to behold and to enter. For the church is

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a ship; the world is a sea; temptations, persecutions, and afflictions, are the waves of it; the prince of the power of the air is the stormy wind which raises them; and heaven is the only port of rest and security. Often during the voyage, for our punishment, or our trial, God permitteth us to be thus assaulted. The succession and the violence of our trouble, the elevations and depressions of mind and fortune, the uncertainty of our counsels, and our utter inability to help ourselves, are finely represented by the multitude and impetuosity of the waves, the tossings and agitations of the vessel, the confusion, terror, and distress among the sailors. In both cases, prayer is the proper effect, and the only remedy left. With the earnestness of affrighted mariners, who will then be devout, though they never were so before, we should "cry unto the Lord Jesus in our trouble;" we should, as it were, "awake" him, like the disciples, with repetitions of "Lord, save us, we perish!" Then will he arise, and rebuke the authors of our tribulation, saying unto them, "Peace, be still;" and they shall hear and obey his voice. "He will "make the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof "shall be still;" and at length he will "bring us" in peace, joy, and gladness, to "our desired haven," there to "exalt him in the congregation" of his chosen, and "praise him in the" great "assembly" of saints and angels. This is the consummation so devoutly wished and requested by the church for all her children, at the time of their baptism, that they, "being delivered from God's wrath, may be received "into the ark of Christ's church; and, being stead-

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"fast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in "charity, may so pass the waves of this trouble-"some world, that finally they may come to the "land of everlasting life." Thus we see there is no spiritual evil, out of which God is not both able and willing to deliver us, when we call upon him. Are we ignorant of the way to the heavenly city? He will guide and conduct us thither. Are we bound with the chains of sin and death? He will loose and deliver us. Are our minds diseased and languid? He will heal and invigorate them. Are we in danger of being overwhelmed by the troubles of the world? He will preserve us in the midst of them, until he bid them cease. Of his power and inclination to do these things for our souls, he hath given assurance to all men, by those pledges of his love, the benefits and blessings conferred on the bodies of his people, in leading them through the wilderness to Canaan; in rescuing them so often from the miseries of captivity; in healing their diseases; and in saving those of them who "did business in great "waters," from the perils of the sea. Certainly the mind of man cannot have a nobler subject for meditation in this world, than the wonders of providence, considered as representing the mercies of redemption.

33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground.* 34. *A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* 35. *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs;* 36. *And there he maketh the hungry to*

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dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37. *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.* 38. *He blessed them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.*

In this latter part of the Psalm, the Prophet farther exemplifieth the power, the justice, and the goodness of God: his power, in being able to change the very nature of things; his justice and his goodness, in so doing, either to punish the rebellious, or to reward the obedient. A well watered and fertile country shall, for the sins of its inhabitants, be converted into a dry and a barren one. The plain of Jordan, which, before the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, was well watered every where, "like the garden of Jehovah," Gen. xiii. 10. hath, since that overthrow, been a land of salt and sulphur, and perpetual sterility. Nay, even the once fruitful Palestine itself, that flowed with milk and honey, is at this day a region of such utter desolation, that the very possibility of its ever having sufficed to maintain the people who formerly possessed it, is now called in question. And, indeed, while the rain of heaven shall continue to be in the hand of God, how easy it is for him, by withholding it during a few months, to blast all the most promising hopes of man; and, instead of plenty, joy, and health, to visit him with famine, pestilence, and death! On the other hand, when the ways of a people please him, he can rid them of these dreadful guests; the rain shall descend from above, the springs shall rise from beneath, the earth shall yield her in-

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crease, the cattle shall feed in large pastures, the seasons shall be kindly, the air salutary, and the smiling face of nature shall attest the loving kindness of the Lord. Thus, in the dispensations of grace, hath he dealt with Jews and Gentiles. The synagogue of the former, once rich in faith, watered with the benedictions of heaven, fruitful in prophets and saints, adorned with the services of religion, and the presence of Jehovah, hath been, since the murder of the Son of God, cursed with infidelity, parched like the withered tops of the mountains of Gilboah, barren and desolate as the land of their ancient residence, whose naked rocks seem to declare to all the world the hard-heartedness and unprofitableness of its old possessors. When the "fruitful field" thus became a "forest," the "wilderness," at the same time, became a "fruitful field." A church was planted in the Gentile world, and the "Spirit was poured out "upon it from on high." In that "wilderness did "waters break out, and streams in that desert." There was faith sown, and holiness was the universal product. "The wilderness and the solitary place "was glad, and the desert rejoiced, and blossomed "as the rose. It blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced "even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon "was given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and "Sharon;" the privileges and honours of the synagogue were conferred upon the church; and the nations now "saw the glory of Jehovah, and the "excellency of God:" Isa. xxxii. 15. xxxv. 1, 2. Spiritual increase, health, and plenty, spiritual peace, joy, and happiness, appeared in beauteous and lovely

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procession, and the blessing of Jesus was upon this his new inheritance in every way.

39. Again they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is *no way. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh* him *families like a flock.*

But let not those who have received the largest share of Heaven's favours therefore boast and presume. The continuance of those favours dependeth upon the continuance of their fidelity and obedience. Mighty empires, with their "princes," have, for their wickedness, been "brought low" by the arm of Jehovah, and laid in the dust, while nations "poor" and feeble, and never thought of, have "been taken from thence, and exalted over them." What revolutions have, in like manner, happened, and probably are still to happen, in the church! Jerusalem is fallen, through unbelief; and the Gentile church standeth only by faith, from which, if she depart, vengeance will be executed on her likewise. Yet, even in the worst of times, there is a promise, that "the poor" in spirit, the faithful and humble disciples of the holy Jesus, shall be preserved from the evil, and "set on high from affliction;" yea, that they shall be multiplied "like a flock," under the care of the good Shepherd, to preserve his name, and to continue a church upon the earth, until he shall return again.

42. The righteous shall see it, *and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.*

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Two consequences will follow from this alternate display of the mercy and the judgement of God. The righteous, finding themselves still the objects of the former, will have cause to rejoice and give thanks; and the wicked, when visited with the latter, will be forced, by their silence at least, to own that their punishment is just. This will certainly be the case at the last day, when the dispensations of God, and the perfect rule of equity observed in them, shall be manifested to all the world.

43. *Whoso* is *wise and will observe these* things, *even they shall understand the loving kindness of the* LORD; or, *Who is wise? and he will observe these things; and they shall understand the loving kindness of the* LORD.

A truly "wise" person will treasure up in his heart the contents of this most instructive and delightful Psalm. By so doing, he will fully "understand and comprehend the weakness and wretchedness of man, and the power and "loving kindness" of God, who, not for our merit, but for his mercy's sake, dispelleth our ignorance, breaketh off our sins, healeth our infirmities, preserveth us in temptations, placeth us in his church, enricheth us with his grace, sheltereth us from persecution, blesseth us in time, and will crown us in eternity.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is composed of parts taken, without any material alteration, from two others. The first five verses occur in Ps. lvii. 7—11.; the last eight are found in Ps. lx. 5—12. The reader is therefore referred to the exposition already given of those Psalms.

PSALM CIX.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter, Acts i. 20. hath taught us to apply the predictions in this Psalm to the betrayers and murderers of Messiah, who is, consequently, the person here speaking, and 1—5. complaining of the injuries which he suffered from them; after which, 6—20. he forewarneth them of all the judgements and sore calamities that should come upon them and their posterity; 21—25. he returneth to the subject of his passion; 26—29. repeateth his supplications for himself and his church; and 30, 31. concludeth with an act of praise.—In this

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light was the Psalm considered and interpreted in the ancient church, by Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Theodoret, and others.

1. *Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise:* i. e. *who art the subject of my praise.* 2. *For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.* 3. *They compassed me about also with words of hatred: and fought against me without a cause.* 4. *For my love, they are my adversaries; but I* give myself unto *prayer.* 5. *And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.*

The holy Jesus, in these words, maketh supplication to the Father for redress and deliverance. He complaineth of the manner in which he was treated, when "he came unto his own, and his own received "him not:" John i. 11. Sometimes "the mouth "of the wicked was opened upon him *," roaring against him, like the roaring of lions, while they cried out, "He is a Samaritan and hath a devil, "and is mad; away with him, away with him, cru- "cify him, crucify him." Sometimes, "deceitful "and lying tongues" were employed, either to entangle and entrap him in his talk, or to bear false witness against him. And all this was done, not only "without a cause," but men were his bitter and implacable "adversaries," in return for that

* Hæc autem cecinit David spirituali sensu in personâ Christi a Judæis impetiti omnimodis blasphemiis. Bossuet.

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"love" which brought him from heaven, to save them with an everlasting salvation. Let the afflicted and traduced disciple rejoice, in that he is conformed to the image of his Master. And from the example of that Master let him learn what course to take, when in such circumstances—"But I give myself "unto prayer."

6. * *Thou wilt set a wicked man,* or, *the wicked one, over him, and Satan shall stand at his right hand.* 7. *When he is judged, he shall be condemned, and his prayer shall become sin.*

A transition is here made to the adversaries of Messiah; primarily to Judas, "who was guide to "them that took Jesus," Acts i. 16.; secondarily, to the synagogue, of whom Judas may be considered as an epitome and representative. It is foretold, that by betraying and murdering the best of masters, they should subject themselves to the tyranny of the worst; that they should become slaves to the "wick-"ed one," who should justly be "set over them," when they had delivered themselves into his hands: that "Satan," who had stood by them to tempt them, should "stand at their right hand" to accuse them at the tribunal of God; that when tried, they would be convicted and "condemned," and even

* As most of the following verbs are in the future tense, and the rest have evidently a predictive and future import, the same liberty is here taken, as in Ps. lxix. of rendering them throughout uniformly in that tense: by which means the curses pronounced in this Psalm will at once appear to be of the same import with those in the xxviiith chapter of Deuteronomy. The reader is entreated, when he shall have perused the Psalm, to turn to that chapter and judge for himself.

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their "prayer" would be abomination in the sight of the Lord, as being offered without true contrition and repentance, without faith, hope, or charity. Such is the wretched state of the Jews, estranged from God, and in bondage to the devil; such the prayers, which, from hardened and malignant hearts, they continually utter, for the excision of all Christians, and for the extirpation of that blessed Name, on which Christians call. These prayers, instead of lightening the burden of their sins, certainly add to its weight. Enable us, O Lord Jesus, to resist Satan as a tempter, that he may not be our accuser; and grant us always so to pray, that our prayers may be heard.

8. *His days shall be few;* and *another shall take his office.*

This is the verse which St. Peter hath cited and applied in his discourse to the disciples, at the election of Matthias into the place of Judas. "Men "and brethren, this scripture must needs have been "fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of "David, spake before concerning Judas, who was "guide to them that took Jesus. For he was num-"bered with us, and had obtained part of this mi-"nistry. Now this man purchased a field with the "reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst "asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed "out—For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let "his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell "therein: and, his bishopric let another take." The former of these two citations is made from Ps. lxix. 25. the latter is a part of the verse now before

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us. If Judas, therefore, be the person whose destruction the sufferer foretelleth, the person speaking in this prophetical Psalm must of necessity be our Lord himself, who suffered by the treachery of Judas. In Ps. lxix. 25. the prediction is in the plural number, "Their habitation shall be void;" yet St. Peter applies it, in the singular number, to Judas. The passage in our Psalm is singular, yet applicable not to Judas only, but to the whole nation of the Jews; whose "days," after they had crucified the Lord of glory, "were few;" who were dispossessed of the place and "office" which they held as the church of God, and to which, with all its honours and privileges, the Gentile Christian church succeeded in their stead, when the Aaronical priesthood was abolished, and that of the true Melchizedek established for ever.

9. *His children shall be fatherless, and his wife a widow.* 10. *His children shall be continually vagabonds, and beg; they shall seek* their bread *also out of their desolate places.*

If, by the wretched death of Judas, his wife became a widow, and his children orphans, vagabonds, and beggars, their fate was but a prelude to that of thousands and ten thousands of the same nation, whose husbands and fathers came afterwards to a miserable end, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Their children, and children's children, have since been "continually vagabonds" upon the earth, in the state of Cain, when he had murdered his righteous brother, not cut off, but marvellously preserved for punishment and woe. Having nothing of their

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own, they roam through all parts of the world, civilized or barbarous, the scorn and contempt of mankind. And even if they are able to amass wealth, their unparalleled avarice still keeps them poor and beggarly in the midst of it. Thus Dr. Hammond, in his Annotation on these verses—"By this is described, in a very lively manner, the condition of the Jewish posterity, ever since their ancestors fell under that signal vengeance, for the crucifying of Christ. First, their desolations and vastations in their own country, and being ejected thence; secondly, their continual wanderings from place to place, scattered over the face of the earth; and, thirdly, their remarkable covetousness, keeping them always poor and beggarly, be they never so rich, and continually labouring and moiling for gain, as the poorest are wont to do; and this is continually the constant curse attending this people whersoever they are scattered."

11. *The extortioner*, or, *creditor*, *shall catch*, or, *seize, all that he hath; and the stranger shall spoil his labour.* 12. *There shall be none to extend mercy to him; neither shall there be any to favour his fatherless children.*

Since the destruction of Jerusalem, how often hath this race been seized, pillaged, stripped, and impoverished, by prince and people, in all the nations of the known world; none appearing, as in other cases, to "favour and extend mercy" to them *! "They

* Thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee—The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours,

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"have had no nation, none to avenge their grievous "wrong, which the Lord God of their forefathers "had ordained they should suffer, at all times, and "in all places, wheresoever they have come, without "redress. Nay, their general carriage hath been so "odious and preposterous, that, albeit the Christian "magistrates had conspired together for their good, "they would themselves have certainly provoked "their own misery." Thus, that excellent divine, the learned and pious Dr. Jackson, vol. i. p. 142. and 135.; whose reflections upon the history of the Jews, at and since their dispersion, it were to be wished that every Christian could peruse. For, as he himself observes, "Christian parents, whether "bodily or spiritual, should be as careful to instruct "their children what the Lord hath done to these "Jews, as the Israelites should have been to tell "their sons what God had done to Pharaoh." Ibid. p. 452.

13. *His posterity shall be cut off,* and *in the generation following, their name shall be blotted out,* 14. *The iniquity of his fathers shall be remembered with the* LORD, *and the sin of his mother shall not be blotted out.* 15. *They shall be before the* LORD *continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.*

The traitorous and rebellious "posterity" of traitorous and rebellious parents, suffered an "exci-"sion" by the Roman sword, and "in the genera-

shall a nation which thou knowest not, eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway. Deut. xxviii. 29. 33.

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"tion following, their name," as a church and civil polity, was "blotted out" of the list of states and kingdoms upon earth. "The iniquity of their fa-"thers," which they had filled up, "was remember-"ed with Jehovah, and the sin of their mother," that is, perhaps, of the synagogue of Jerusalem, now in bondage with her children, "was not blotted out; "that upon them might come all the righteous blood "shed, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the "blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the "temple and the altar:" Matt. xxiii. 35. The blood of the prophets cried for vengeance against those who crucified the Lord of the prophets. God hid not his face any longer from all these horrible transgressions, but "they were before him conti-"nually," and occasioned him to "cut off the me-"mory" of his people, once precious and fragrant, "from the earth;" so that while apostles and martyrs are annually commemorated with honour, and their good deeds, blossoming out of the dust, perfume the church, and delight the souls of the faithful, names of "Judas," and "Jew," are never mentioned but with contempt and abhorrence.

16. *Because that he remembered not to show mercy; but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.*

The crime which brought upon its perpetrators all the above-mentioned judgements and calamities, is here pointed out too plainly to be mistaken. They "remembered not to show mercy" to him, who showed it to all the world; they "persecuted" him who for our sakes became "poor," and who conde-

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scended to ask of his creatures water to drink; they betrayed and murdered the lowly and afflicted Jesus, whose "heart" was "broken" with sorrow for their sins, and with a sense of the punishment due to them. How long will it be, ere the brethren of this most innocent and most injured Joseph, "say one "to another, We are verily guilty concerning our "brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, "when he besought us, and we would not hear: "THEREFORE is this distress come upon us!" Gen. xlii. 21.

17. *As he loved cursing, so shall it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so shall it be far from him.* 18. *As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment, so shall it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.* 19. *It shall be unto him as the garment* which *covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.* 20. *This* shall be *the reward of mine adversaries from the* LORD, *and of them that speak evil against my soul.*

They who reject Christ, reject the fountain of "blessing," and choose a "curse" for their portion; and this portion, when they have finally made their choice, will certainly be given to them in full measure. The curse, that lighted on the Jewish nation, is resembled, for its universality and adhesion, to a "garment," which covereth the whole man, and is "girded" close about his loins; for its diffusive and penetrating nature, to "water," which, from the stomach, passeth into the "bowels," and is dispersed through all the vessels of the frame; and to "oil,"

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which imperceptibly insinuates itself into the very "bones." When that unhappy multitude, assembled before Pontius Pilate, pronounced the words, "His blood be on us, and on our children," Matt. xxvii. 25. then did they put on the envenomed garment, which has stuck to and tormented the nation ever since; then did they eagerly swallow down that deadly draught, the effects whereof have been the infatuation and misery of 1700 years! If such, in this world, be "reward of Messiah's adversaries, "and of those who spake evil against him," what will hereafter be the vengeance inflicted on those who "crucify him afresh, and put him again to an "open shame?" Heb. vi. 6. And what will be the operation of the sentence, "Go, ye cursed," upon the bodies and souls of the wicked? how will it at once affect all the senses of the former, and all the faculties of the latter, with pain, anguish, horror, and despair! Think on these things, ye sinners; tremble, and repent!

21. *But do thou for me, O* GOD *the Lord,* Heb. JEHOVAH *the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy* is *good, deliver thou me.* 22. *For I* am *poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.* 23. *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.* 24. *My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness.* 25. *I became also a reproach unto them:* when *they looked upon me, they shaked their heads.*

In this last part of the Psalm Messiah petitioneth for deliverance, urging to the Father his power as "Lord," the honour of his "name," and the great-

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ness of his "mercy." He then pleadeth his own humiliation and affliction, his "poverty" and "heart"-felt agony of grief. Drawing towards the evening of his mortal life, he compareth himself to a "shadow, declining," and about to vanish from the earth, where he hath no rest, being persecuted from place to place, as a "locust" is driven hither and thither by the stormy wind and tempest; while enfeebled and emaciated by frequent "fastings," and long want of food during his passion, he was ready to sink under his burden; and what aggravated all his sufferings, was, that he met with no pity and compassion from those around him; his enemies "reproached" and "reviled him, shaking their "heads, and saying, Ah! thou that destroyest the "temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself," &c. Mark xv. 29. Nor are we to suppose our Lord thus praying for his natural body only, but also for his mystical body, the church, that from all distresses, persecutions, and insults, the members of that body may in time be delivered, like their blessed Head, by a joyful resurrection to eternal life.

26. *Help me, O* LORD *my God; O save me, according to thy mercy.* 27. *That they may know that this* is *thy hand;* that *thou* LORD *hast done it.*

The resurrection of Christ was to be the great demonstration of Jehovah's power; and it was published as such by the apostles to all the nations of the world, who thereupon believed, and were converted. The Jews alone hardened their hearts against that proof, and continued impenitent.

28. *They will curse, but thou shalt bless: when*

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they arise, they shall be ashamed; but thy servant shall rejoice. 29. *Mine adversaries shall be clothed with shame: and they shall cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle.*

The apostate sons of Israel, though they have been so long "confounded" and blasted by the breath of Heaven's displeasure, yet continue "curs-"ing" and blaspheming, as it is here foretold that they should do. But God hath "blessed" his Son Jesus, and through him all nations, who have been adopted into his family, and made his children by baptism; yea, and they shall be blessed, and enter, by thousands and millions, into the "joy" of their Lord, in that day when his crucifiers shall have no "covering" but their own "shame" and "con-"fusion."

30. *I will greatly praise the* LORD *with my mouth: yea, I will praise him among the multitude.* 31. *For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save* him *from those that condemn his soul.*

The former of these two verses is parallel to that which St. Paul citeth from Ps. xxii. 22. "He that "sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of "one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call "them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name "unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will "I sing praises unto thee:" Heb. ii. 11. Great is the joy of the redeemed upon earth; greater will it be, after the resurrection of the dead, in the courts of heaven. Jesus, unjustly put to death, and now risen again, is a perpetual advocate and intercessor for his people, ever ready to appear on their behalf

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against the iniquitous sentence of a corrupt world, and the malice of the grand accuser.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CX.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm David prophesieth concerning, 1. the exaltation of Christ; 2. the sceptre of his kingdom; 3. the character of his subjects; 4. his everlasting priesthood; 5, 6. his tremendous victories and judgements; 7. the means of his obtaining both kingdom and priesthood, by his sufferings and resurrection. Parts of this prophecy are cited and applied in the New Testament, by our Lord himself, Matt. xxii. 43. by St. Peter, Acts ii. 34. by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 25. Heb. v. 6. The church, likewise, hath appointed it as one of the Proper Psalms to be read on Christmas-day. It appertaineth literally and solely to King Messiah.

1. *The* LORD *said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

We are here informed of Jehovah's eternal and unchangeable decree concerning the kingdom of Messiah, its extension, power, and duration. That Messiah should, after his sufferings, be thus exalted,

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was determined in the divine counsel and covenant, before the world began. Whether we suppose the Psalmist to be speaking of that determination, or of its actual accomplishment at the time of Christ's ascension into heaven, it maketh no great difference. The substance of the decree is the same. It was addressed by the Father to the Son, by Jehovah to Messiah, whom David in spirit styleth, אֲדֹנִי, "my "Lord;" one that should come after him, as his offspring according to the flesh; but one, in dignity of person, and greatness of power, far superior to him, and to every earthly potentate; King of kings, and Lord of lords; God and man united in one person. To this person it was said by the Father, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine ene- "mies thy footstool;" in other words, Seeing, O my Son Messiah, thou hast glorified me on the earth, and finished the work which I gave thee to do, the great work of man's redemption; take now the throne prepared for thee from the foundation of the world; behold, all power is given unto thee; enter upon thy mediatorial kingdom, and reign till every opposer shall have submitted himself to thee, and sin and death shall have felt thy all-conquering arm.

2. *The* LORD *shall send the rod of thy strength out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

In the foregoing verse, David related the words spoken by the Father to the Son. In this, he himself, as a prophet, directeth his speech to King Messiah, predicting the glorious consequences of his enthronization, and the manner in which "his ene-

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"mies" are to be made "his footstool." The "rod," or sceptre of Christ's "strength" is his word, accompanied by his Spirit. The law was given to Israel from Sinai, but the Gospel went forth from "Sion;" it was "preached to all nations, be-"ginning at Jerusalem," Luke xxiv. 47.; there began the spiritual kingdom of Jesus; there were the first converts made; and from thence the faith was propagated by the apostles, to the ends of the earth. This David seeing beforehand, cries out, "Rule "thou in the midst of thine enemies!" Go on, victorious Prince; plant the standard of thy cross among the thickest ranks of the adversary; and, in opposition to both Jew and Gentile tumultuously raging against thee, erect and establish thy church throughout the world! This was accordingly done with marvellous speed and success; and the church, thus erected and established among the nations, hath been as marvellously preserved, "in the midst of "her enemies," unto this day; yea, and the world shall sooner be destroyed, than she shall cease to be preserved.

3. *Thy people* shall be *willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness: from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

The blessed effects of the Gospel, upon its publication, are here foretold. "The people" of Christ are those given him by his Father, and gathered to him by the preachers of his word. "The day of "his power" is the season of their conversion, when the corruptions of nature can no longer hold out against the prevailing influences of grace; when

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the heart, will, and affections, turn from the world to God; and they make, as the first disciples did, a free and voluntary offer of themselves, and all they have, to their Redeemer. Then it is that they appear "in "the beauties of holiness," adorned with humility, faith, hope, love, and all the graces of the Spirit. With regard to the last clause of this verse, bishop Lowth, in his admired Lectures *, has observed, and proved, that it may be fairly construed to this effect; —"More than the dew from the womb of the "morning is the dew of thy progeny;" that is, Thy children, begotten to thee through the Gospel, shall exceed in number, as well as brightness and beauty, the spangles of early dew, which the morning discloseth to the delighted eye of the beholder. The whole verse, therefore, containeth a lively character of the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, who are described by their relation to him as "his "people;" by their "willingness" to obey and serve him; by their honourable attire, the rich and splendid robes of "holiness;" and by their multitudes, resembling the drops of "dew" upon the grass.

4. *The* LORD *hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou* art *a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

From Christ's regal office, and the administration thereof by the sceptre of his word and Spirit, the Prophet passeth to his sacerdotal office, which was also conferred on him by the decree of the Father,

* Prælect. x.

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and that decree, as we are told, ratified by an oath; "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent," or, change his purpose. The oath of God was the great seal of heaven, designed to intimate the importance of the deed to which it was set, and "to "show to the heirs of promise the immutability of "his counsel:" Heb. vi. 17. Whether this oath passed at the actual consecration of Messiah to the priesthood upon his ascension, or at his designation thereto by covenant before the world, sufficient it is for our assurance and comfort, that it did pass. We have a Priest in heaven, who standeth continually pleading the merits of his sacrifice once offered upon the cross: "who ever liveth to make intercession "for us;" and who is ready, at all times, to bless us, "by turning away every man from his iniquities," Acts iii. 26.; by aiding us against our enemies, and supporting us under our necessities. Oblation, intercession, and benediction, are the three branches of the sacerdotal office, which our great High Priest now exerciseth for us, and in the exercise of which the Father hath condescended in the most awful manner to promise, that he will hear and accept him on our behalf. His priesthood is not, like that of Aaron, figurative, successive, and transient, but real and effectual, fixed and incommunicable, eternal and unchangeable, according to that pattern of it exhibited to Abraham, before the law, in the person of Melchizedek, Gen. xiv. 18—20. and discoursed upon at large by the apostle, Heb. vii. throughout.

5. *The* LORD *upon thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.* 6. *He shall*

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judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places *with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries;* Heb. *the head over much country.*

This is a description of the vengeance which King Messiah should take on his impenitent adversaries. By "The LORD, or, my LORD, upon thy right hand," אדני על ימינך, the same person must undoubtedly be understood, who is mentioned in the first verse under the same title, אדני, as "sitting at the right "hand of Jehovah." And the Psalmist, who has hitherto addressed himself to Messiah, or the Son, must be supposed now to make a sudden apostrophe to Jehovah, or the Father; as if he had said, "This my Lord Messiah, who sitteth at thy right "hand, O Jehovah, shall smite through kings in "the day of his wrath;" the kings of the earth will endeavour to destroy his religion, and put an end to his kingdom; the Neros, the Domitians, the Diocletians, the Maxentiuses, the Julians, &c. &c. shall stand up, and set themselves in array against him; but "the Lamb shall overcome them;" he shall "judge" and punish the "Heathen" princes, with their people, when in arms against his church; he shall raise up those who shall successfully fight his battles, and strew the ground with their "car-"cases." As Messiah hath done to the antichristian powers of old, so shall he do to all others, before or at his second advent. There is a day of forbearance, during which he will have his church to be, like himself, oppressed and afflicted, humble and resigned; but there is also a future day of wrath and

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recompense, when the sins and provocations of her persecutors shall be ripe for judgement; when their triumphs and her sufferings shall be at an end; when they shall fall for ever, and she shall ascend to heaven.

7. *He shall drink of the brook*, or, *torrent, in the way; and therefore shall he lift up his head.*

The means, by which Christ should obtain his universal kingdom, and everlasting priesthood, seem here to be assigned. In his "way" to glory, he was to drink deep of the waters of affliction *, the swollen "torrent" occurred in the way and presented itself between him and the throne of God. To this "torrent in the way," the Saviour descended; he bowed himself down, and "drank" of it for us

* The Hebrew word נחל signifies, in general, "a current of "water," which may be either a turbid, overwhelming "torrent," or a clear and gentle "stream." In Psal. xviii. 4. it denotes the "floods of ungodliness." In Psal. xxxvi. 8. it is used to signify the "river of divine pleasures," Hence arises an ambiguity in the interpretation of the words, "He shall drink of the brook "in the way," which may be expounded either of the sufferings Christ tasted, or the refreshments he experienced; as the "waters" are supposed to be those of "affliction," or those of "comfort." Either way the sense is good and true, as it relates to Messiah. "Torrents," or the "overflowing of rivers," in the Scripture language, certainly, as Dr. Durell observes, do often denote "afflictions;" as in Psal. xviii. 4. cxxiv. 4, 5. cxliv. 7, &c. "the being oppressed by them," is also described by the action of "drinking," Psal. lx. 3. lxxv. 8, &c. And the idea of a "brook in the WAY," or the ROAD, seems to favour this exposition. But the author advances it, as becomes him to do, with great deference and submission, since Bishop Lowth and Mr. Merrick are of a different opinion.

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all; "and THEREFORE, עלכן, did he lift up his "head;" that is, he arose victorious, and, from the valley in which the torrent ran, ascended to the summit of that holy and heavenly mount, where he reigneth, till "his enemies be made his footstool." St. Paul hath expressed the same sentiment in literal terms; "He humbled himself, and became obedient "unto death, even the death of the cross: WHERE-"FORE, διο, God, also hath highly exalted him." Phil. ii. 8.

PSALM CXI.

ARGUMENT.

This is one of the Proper Psalms appointed by the church to be read on Easter-day. It containeth, 1. a resolution to praise Jehovah in the congregation, 2, 3. for his great and glorious works, and, 4. for the appointed memorials of them: 5, 6. his mercies to the church are celebrated, and, 7, 8. the equity and the stability of his counsels declared; 9. the blessings of redemption, and the new covenant, are mentioned, as they were prefigured of old in God's dispensation toward Israel. 10. Religion is proclaimed to be true wisdom.

1. *I will praise the* LORD, *with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and* in *the congregation.*

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Jehovah is to be "praised," not only with the voice and the understanding, but with the "heart," with the "whole" heart, and all its affections tuned, like the chords of the son of Jesse's harp, to a song of gratitude and love. Solitary devotion hath, doubtless, its beauties and excellencies; but how glorious is it to hear the voices of a whole Christian "congregation" break forth into hallelujahs, like the sound of many waters, and the noise of mighty thunderings, while each one, as it were, provokes another to continue the blessed employment, with unremitted attention, and unabated fervour!

2. *The works of the* LORD are *great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*

The subjects of man's praise are the "works" of God. Every one of these works, whether in the natural or the spiritual system, is "great." Nothing cometh from the hands of the divine Artist, but what is excellent and perfect in its kind, adapted with infinite skill to its proper place, and fitted for its intended use. Happy are they, who with humility and diligence, with faith and devotion, give themselves to the contemplation of these works, and take "pleasure," and delight therein. To them shall the gate of true science open; they shall understand the mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption; and they who thus "seek," shall find the treasures of eternal wisdom.

3. *His work* is *honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

The "work," of all others, in which the "honour

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"and glorious majesty" of Jehovah appeared, and which the Christian church celebrates with this Psalm, is the salvation and exaltation of our nature, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; an event which contained in it the accomplishment of the ancient promises, and thereby demonstrated to all the world the everlasting truth, fidelity, and "righteousness," of him who made them.

4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: or, *he hath appointed a memorial for his wonders: the* LORD *is gracious and full of compassion.*

Jewish feasts were "memorials" of the "wonders" wrought for Israel of old; Christian festivals are "memorials" of the "wonders" wrought in Christ for all mankind, to whom, no less than to Israel, God hath now showed himself "gracious and full of compassion."

5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant. 6. He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may, or, *might, give them the heritage of the heathen.*

Agreeably to the "covenant" which God made with Abraham, as concerning his children according to the flesh, he "fed" and supported them in the wilderness, he overthrew their enemies by the might of his "power," and he put them in possession of Canaan, which before was "the heritage of the Heathen." Agreeably to the covenant which God made with the same Abraham, as concerning all be-

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lievers, those "children of the promise which are "counted for the seed," he feedeth them in the world with the true manna*, the bread which cometh down from heaven; he hath again "showed the "power of his works" in the overthrow of idolatry; and again, by the conversion of the nations, given to his church "the heritage of the Heathen;" although, like Israel, she is commanded, and hath had frequent admonitions, not to fix her heart on an earthly Canaan; not to expect any permanent habitation, any enduring city here below; not to stop short of an eternal and heavenly rest.

7. *The works of his hands* are *verity and judgement; all his commandments* are *sure*. 8. *They stand fast for ever and ever*, and are *done in truth and uprightness.*

In all God's dispensations towards his faithful servants, and towards his impenitent adversaries, we admire and adore his "verity" in the performance of his promises to the former, and his "justice" in executing his vengeance on the latter. Thus the time of fulfilling his promise to Abraham came not till the iniquity of the Amorites was full. The case is the same as to the coming of Christ, the subversion of Paganism, the deaths of persecutors, the rise and fall of nations, the conversion or excision of individuals, and every other instance of mercy or judgement. Another property of God's works is, that,

* "Escam dedit"—Manna: quæ cætera Dei mirabilia in memoriam revocabat: unde in Arcâ servari jussa. Exod. xvi. 32. Erat autem Eucharistiæ figura, quæ verè divini amoris monumentum æternum. BOSSUET.

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being "done in truth and uprightness, they stand fast "for ever;" and will then appear in perfect glory and beauty, when all the arts and labours of man shall be no more.

9. *He sent redemption unto his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend*, or *terrible*, is *his name.*

He who "sent redemption" to Israel by the hand of Moses, hath now "sent redemption" by the power of Jesus to all the world: he who, at mount Sinai, established his "covenant" with his people, and gave them a law, hath now established his "co-"venant" with the Gentiles, and published to them his Gospel from Sion. "Holy is his name;" and therefore "terrible" to those who, under all the means of grace, continue unholy.

10. *The fear of the* LORD is *the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do* his commandments: *his praise endureth for ever.*

The "fear of God" is the first step to salvation, as it exciteth a sinner to depart from evil, and to do good; to implore pardon, and to sue for grace; to apply to a Saviour for the one, and to a Sanctifier for the other. Religion is the perfection of wisdom, practice the best instructor, and thanksgiving the sweetest recreation.

PSALM CXII.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist enumerateth the blessings attending the man who feareth Jehovah; 1. the pleasure

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which he taketh in doing his will; 2. the prosperity of his seed; 3. the plenteousness in his house; 4. his comfort in trouble; 5. his internal joys; 6. the honour with which he is remembered; 7, 8. his holy confidence in God; 9. his good deeds, and the reward of them; 10. the envy, wretchedness, and perdition of the wicked. The blessings of the Gospel are spiritual and eternal; and they are conferred upon the members of the Christian church through Christ their head, who is the pattern of all righteousness, and the giver of all grace.

1. *Blessed* is *the man* that *feareth the* LORD, that *delighteth greatly in his commandments*; or, *he delighteth greatly in his commandments.*

The man who duly "feareth God," is delivered from every other fear; the man who "delighteth in "God's commandments," is freed from every inordinate desire of earthly things; and such a man must needs be "blessed." Of this kind was thy blessedness, O holy Jesu, on whom did rest "the "spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah," and whose "meat" it was "to do the will of him "that sent thee, and to finish his work." Isa. xi. 2. John iv. 34.

2. *His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.*

A father's piety derives the benediction of Heaven upon his children. The posterity of faithful Abraham were often spared and favoured on account of

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their progenitor; as the whole family of believers, Abraham and all, are blessed in Him, who is the great Father of that family, and the Author of their salvation.

3. *Wealth and riches* shall be *in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

It sometimes pleaseth God to bestow on his servants, as he did on Israel of old, the good things of this world. And a rich man is therefore happier than a poor man, because "it is more blessed to give "than to receive:" Acts xx. 35. But the true "wealth" of Christians is of another kind; their "riches" are such as neither moth can corrupt, nor thief steal. Grace and glory are in the "house" of Christ, and everlasting "righteousness" is the portion of his children.

4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness;* he is *gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.*

While we are on earth, we are subject to a threefold "darkness;" the darkness of error, the darkness of sorrow, and the darkness of death. To dispel these, God visiteth us, by his word, with a threefold "light;" the light of truth, the light of comfort, and the light of life. The Christian's temper is framed after the pattern of his Master; and he is ever ready to show to others that "love" and "mercy" which have been shown to him.

5. *A good man showeth favour and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.*

The former part of this verse may be rendered, with a little variation, "It is well with the man who

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"is gracious and communicative." Ill-nature and avarice are their own tormentors: but love and liberality do good to themselves by doing it to others, and enjoy all the happiness which they cause. It is not God's intention, that any of the talents which he bestowed upon us should lie dead, but that our brethren should have the use of them; even as Christ received the Spirit to communicate it to us, and our salvation is his glory and joy. The latter part of this verse is likewise capable of a different, and, indeed, a more literal translation: "He will "support, or maintain, his words, or his transactions, "in judgement;" that is, he who thus employeth his talents for the benefit of mankind, will be able to render a good account to his Lord who intrusteth them with him.

6. *Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* 7. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the* LORD. 8. *His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his* desire *upon his enemies.*

Nothing can deprive the person here described of his felicity. When his work is done, his body will go to its repose in the dust, but the "memorial" of his name and of his good deeds will be still fresh as the morning breeze, and fragrant as the flower of the spring. "He feareth no evil report," no blast of slander and malice can touch him; no tidings of calamity and destruction can shake his confidence in God; but he will hear the trump of judgement, and

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behold the world in flames, rather with joy than with dread; as knowing, by those tokens, that the hour of his redemption is come, when "he shall see his "enemies," and even death, the last of them, under his feet.

9. *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.*

His riches are not hoarded up, but "dispersed" abroad; and that not by others after his death, but by himself in his life-time; "He hath dispersed." They are not squandered in the ways of vanity and folly, but "given to the poor;" nor are they given indiscriminately and at random, but "dispersed," like precious seed, with prudence and discretion, according to the nature of the soil, and in proper season, so as to produce the most plentiful harvest. Therefore "his righteousness endureth for ever;" its fruits and its good report are lasting among men, and it is never forgotten before God, who hath prepared for it an eternal reward. "His horn shall be "exalted with honour, or, in glory;" whatever may be his lot upon earth, and even there the charitable man will frequently be had in "honour," at the last day, certainly, when the thrones of the mighty shall be cast down, and the sceptres of tyrants broken in pieces, then shall he lift up his head, and be exalted to partake of the "glory" of his Redeemer, the author of his faith, and the pattern of his charity, who gave himself for us, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

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10. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.*

The sight of Christ in glory, with his saints, will, in an inexpressible manner, torment the crucifiers of the one, and the persecutors of the others; as it will show them the hopes and wishes of their adversaries all granted to the full, and all their own "desires" and designs for ever at an end; it will excite an envy which must prey upon itself, produce a grief which can admit of no comfort, give birth to a worm which can never die, and blow up those fires which nothing can quench.

PSALM CXIII.

ARGUMENT.

The servants of God are, 1. exhorted to praise his name, 2. at all times, and, 3. in all places, on account, 4, 5. of his power and glory, 6—8. of his mercy in redeeming man, and, 9. making the Gentile church to be a joyful mother of children. This Psalm is appointed to be read on Easter-day.

1. *Praise, O ye servants of the* LORD, *praise the name of the* LORD. 2. *Blessed be the name of the* LORD, *from this time forth, and for evermore.*

Christians are the "servants" of Jesus Christ; and a most delightful part of their service it is, to

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"praise" his holy and saving "name" in the church, which now useth this Psalm among others, and with it "blesseth the name" of her Lord and Saviour, from age to age. The Psalmist wished and prayed that this might be done, and he foresaw that it would be done, while the world should last, upon earth, and afterwards "for evermore" in heaven.

3. *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the* LORD's *name* is *to be praised;* or, is *praised.* 4. *The* LORD *is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.*

At the diffusion of the Gospel through the world, the name of Christ was praised "from the east to the "west," in churches every where planted by the apostles and their successors: and the grand subjects of joy and triumph among believers were, the superiority of their Master over the "Heathen nations" and their idols; the exaltation of "his glory above "the heavens," and all the powers therein; the might of his arm, and the majesty of his kingdom.

5. *Who* is *like unto the* LORD *our God, who dwelleth on high?* 6. *Who humbleth* himself *to behold* the things that are *in heaven and in earth.*

Highly as our Lord is exalted above this system, above these heavens and this earth of ours, yet he condescendeth to regard every thing that passeth here, and to make us, the inhabitants of this lower world, and, for our sakes, all the other creatures in it, the objects of his peculiar care, and paternal love.

7. *He raiseth the poor out of the dust,* and *lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;* 8. *That he may set*

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him *with princes*, even *with the princes of his people.*

Such is his mercy to the poor sons of Adam in their fallen estate, that from the lowest and most abject condition, from the pollutions of sin, and from the dishonours of the grave, he raiseth them to righteousness and holiness, to glory and immortality; he setteth them on high, with the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, "with the princes of his peo-"ple," the leaders of the armies above, with angels and archangels before his throne. What is the exaltation of the meanest beggar from a dunghill to an earthly diadem, when compared with that of human nature from the grave to the throne of God! Here is honour worthy our ambition; honour after which, all are alike invited to aspire; which all may obtain, who strive worthily and lawfully; and of which when once obtained, nothing can ever deprive the possessors.

9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house,* and to be *a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the* LORD.

In the sacred history of the Old Testament, we meet with frequent instances of barren women who were miraculously made to bear children. Isaac, Joseph, Samson, and Samuel, were thus born of Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, and Hannah. To these may be added, from the history of the New Testament, the instance of Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, and mother of St. John the Baptist. These examples may be considered as preludes to that marvellous exertion of divine power, whereby the

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Gentile church, after so many years of barrenness, became, in her old age, "a fruitful parent of chil-"dren, and the mother of us all." Wherefore it is written, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; "break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that "didst not travail with child: for more are the "children of the desolate, than the children of the "married wife, saith the LORD." Isa. liv. 1. Gal. iv. 27.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXIV.

ARGUMENT.

This is another of the Psalms appointed by our church to be read on Easter-day. It celebrates the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the miracles wrought for that people, prefiguring the redemption of our nature from sin and death, and the wonders of mercy and love wrought for us by Jesus Christ.

1. *When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;* 2. *Judah was his,* that is, *God's, sanctuary,* and *Israel his dominion.*

When Jehovah delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, he chose them for his peculiar people; his presence resided in their camp, as in a "sanctuary,"

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or temple; and he ruled them, as an earthly king exerciseth sovereignty in his "dominions." This world, and the Prince of this world, are to us, what Egypt and Pharaoh were to Israel. The redemption of our nature, by the resurrection of Christ, answereth to their redemption by the hand of Moses. When we are baptized into the death and resurrection of our Lord, we renounce the world, its pomps and vanities; and should, therefore, quit its corrupt "language," manners, and customs, with as much alacrity and expedition, as "the family of Jacob" left those of Egypt. We are the "sanctuary," the temple, in which Christ dwelleth by his Spirit; we are the subjects of his spiritual "kingdom," we are his peculiar people; in one word, we are his "church," and succeed, as such, to all the titles and privileges formerly conferred on Israel.

3. *The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back.*

Although forty years intervened between the two events here mentioned, yet, as the miracles were of a similar nature, they are spoken of together. In the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, we may contemplate our passage from a death of sin to a life of righteousness through the waters of baptism; as our translation from death temporal to life eternal, is figured by their entrance into the promised land through the river Jordan. The waters in both cases are poetically represented as sensible of their Creator's presence; and by their retiring, and opening a path for the people of God, we are taught, that if we

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continue faithful, all obstructions will be removed in our way to heaven.

4. The mountains skipped like rams, and *the little hills like lambs.*

The tremours of mount Sinai and the neighbouring hills, when the law was given, afforded some specimen of that power which was afterwards exerted in the overthrow of idolatry, and the casting down of every high thing that exalted itself against the Gospel at its publication. "See, therefore, that ye "refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped "not, who refused him that spake on earth, much "more shall not we escape, if we turn away from "him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then "shook the earth; but now he hath promised, say-"ing, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but "also heaven." Heb. xii. 25.

5. What ailed *thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest; thou, Jordan,* that *thou wast driven back? 6. Ye mountains,* that *ye skipped like rams;* and *ye little hills, like lambs? 7. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the* LORD, *at the presence of the God of Jacob.*

If the divine presence hath such an effect upon inanimate matter, how ought it to operate on rational and accountable beings? Let us be afraid, with an holy fear, at the presence of God, in the world by his Providence, and by his Spirit in our consciences; so that we may have hope and courage in the day when he shall arise to shake terribly the earth; when "every island shall fly away, and the mountains shall "be no more found." Rev. xvi. 20.

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8. *Which turned the rock* into *a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.*

He who brought water out of the sacramental rock in the wilderness, hath since caused rivers of living water to flow through the world, from the Rock of our salvation; nay, he hath dissolved the stony hearts of sinners, and made to spring up in them fountains of this water of life. For these great instances of his power and his love, we are taught to bless his holy name, when we sing this Psalm, as an evangelical hymn, on the day of our Lord's resurrection.

PSALM CXV.

ARGUMENT.

The church, 1, 2. prayeth that God would glorify himself in her salvation; 3. she declareth her faith in him; 4—8. exposeth the vanity and folly of idolatry; 9—11. exhorteth her children to rely upon Jehovah; 12—15. foretelleth how he will bless, prosper, and increase his people, 16—18. never suffering the voice of praise and thanksgiving to cease upon the earth.

1. *Not unto us, O* LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy,* and *for thy truth's sake.* 2. *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where* is *now their God?*

From these two verses it is evident, that the Psalm is not a thanksgiving for victory, but a petition for

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deliverance. God is entreated to "give glory," by such deliverance, "not to us," to our works or endeavours, but "to his own name;" he is requested to vouchsafe salvation, not on account of our merits, but of his "mercy," which inclineth him to be gracious; of his "truth," which disposeth him to fulfil his promises; and of his "honour," that the enemy may not have occasion to blaspheme him, and reproach his servants, as if their Master either could not, or would not, help them in the day of their distress. "Wherefore should the Heathen "say, Where is now their God?"

3. *But our God* is *in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased;* or, *he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth.*

Should the insulting adversary ask the above question, "Where is now their God?" the faithful are ready with their reply, "Our God is in the "heavens;" he is, where he ever was, upon his glorious throne, high over all the kingdoms of the world, and the powers of created nature; from thence he observeth and ordereth all things here below; what we suffer is by his appointment; and, at his good time and pleasure, he both can and will relieve us: "he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth."

4. *Their idols* are *silver and gold, the work of men's hands.* 5. *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not.* 6. *They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not.* 7. *They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat.*

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A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the Heathen idols. He made every thing, they are themselves made by men; he is in heaven, they are upon earth; he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, they can do nothing; he seeth the distresses, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance, and effecteth the salvation of his servants; they are blind, deaf, and dumb, senseless, motionless, and impotent. Equally slow to hear, equally impotent to save in time of greatest need, will every worldly idol prove, on which men have set their affections, and to which they have, in effect, said, "Thou art my God."

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

Idolaters, like the objects of their worship, are rather lifeless images than real men. What our Lord said of the Jews, is applicable to them, and indeed to all who reject the knowledge of the true God, and the doctrines of salvation: "Having eyes they see "not, having ears they hear not." They see not the things which belong unto their peace; they hear not the word of instruction and exhortation; they speak not of religion and the kingdom of heaven; they work not the works of piety and charity; they walk not in the path of the divine commandments; they are spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, lame, and impotent; and when their idols are destroyed, they will perish in like manner.

9. *O Israel, trust thou in the* LORD; *he is their help and their shield.* 10. *O house of Aaron, trust in the* LORD; *he is their help and their shield.*

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11. *Ye that fear the* LORD, *trust in the* LORD: *he is their help and their shield.*

Let the men of the world make to themselves gods, and vainly trust in the work of their own hands or heads; but let the church repose all her confidence in Jehovah, her Saviour and Redeemer, who alone can be her defender and protector; more especially let her ministers, the sons of the true Aaron, do this, who are the peculiar portion of their God, employed continually in his service, and designed to build up others in faith and hope; and let all who have been instructed, by their ministry, in the fear of the Lord, trust always in him, nor suffer any apprehension of danger or distress to separate them from him.

12. *The* LORD *hath been*, or, *is, mindful of us; he will bless* us; *he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron.* 13. *He will bless them that fear the* LORD, *both small and great.* 14. *The* LORD *shall increase you more and more, you and your children.* 15. *Ye* are *blessed of the* LORD, *which made heaven and earth.*

The heart of the Psalmist is full of "blessing," and on his tongue is the word of kindness and comfort. The "blessings" formerly confined to Israel, have since been extended to the whole race of mankind. Jehovah, ever "mindful" of his creatures, hath visited the world by his Son and by his Spirit; he hath formed a church from among the Gentiles, appointed a priesthood and ministry in it, and given his benediction to both; he hath "blessed," with the blessings of grace, "them that fear him," of all

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nations, and of every degree; he hath "increased" and multiplied his people exceedingly; and the faithful members of the Christian church are now "the "blessed of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth," and who is, consequently, possessed of all power in both.

16. *The heaven*, even *the heavens*, or, *the heavens of heavens, are the* LORD'S; *but the earth hath he given to the children of men.* 17. *The dead praise not the* LORD, *neither any that go down into silence.* 18. *But we will bless the* LORD, *from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the* LORD.

He who himself dwelleth in the highest heavens, where he is praised and glorified by angels, hath "given the earth" for an habitation, at present, "to "the sons of men," whose duty it is to praise and glorify him here below, as the angels do above. Now as "the dead cannot praise him," as they who sleep in the silent grave cannot celebrate him, we may be certain, that he will not suffer his people to be destroyed and extirpated, but will always preserve a church to "bless him" in all ages, till the end of the world; when the dead shall be raised, and the choirs of heaven and earth shall be united, to praise and glorify him together before his throne for evermore.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXVI.

ARGUMENT.

It is not certain by whom, or upon what occasion, this Psalm was composed. It plainly appears,

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however, to be a song of thanksgiving for deliverance from trouble, either temporal, or spiritual, or both. To render it of general use, let it be considered as an evangelical hymn, in the mouth of a penitent, expressing his gratitude for salvation from sin and death. 1, 2. He declareth his love of God, who hath vouchsafed to hear his prayer; 3—9. describeth his distress, his deliverance out of it, and subsequent peace and comfort; 10, 11. he acknowledgeth himself to have been tempted to despond, but was supported by faith, in the day of trouble; 12—19. he determineth to receive the cup of salvation, to praise and to serve Jehovah, who thus delivereth the souls of his people.

1. *I love the* LORD, *because he hath heard my voice* and *my supplications.* 2. *Because he hath inclined his ears unto me, therefore will I call upon* him *as long as I live.*

In the original it is, "I love*, because Jehovah "hath heard," &c. The soul, transported with gratitude and love, seems at first to express her affection without declaring its object, as thinking that all the world must know who is the person intended. Thus Mary Magdalen, in her conversation, at the sepulchre, with one whom she supposed to have been the gardener, though no previous mention had been made of Jesus, saith, "Sir, if thou have borne HIM

* Some critics prefer our old version,—"I am well pleased."

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"hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I "will take him away:" John xx. 15. And ought not the love of God to be excited in all our hearts by the consideration that, when we were not able to raise ourselves up to him, he mercifully and tenderly "inclined" and bowed down "his ear" to us; he "heard our supplications," and descended from heaven to help and deliver us? With hope, therefore, and confidence should we "call upon him," in all our troubles, "as long as we live."

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow.* 4. *Then called I upon the name of the* LORD; *O* LORD, *I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*

These "sorrows," or "bands of death," once "compassed" the human race: these "pains of "hell" were ready to seize on every son of Adam. The awakened and terrified conscience of a sinner hath felt the oppression of the former, and experienced some foretaste of the latter. In this situation he is described by St. Paul as crying out, "O "wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me "from this body of death?" Let him take the course which the Psalmist took; let him "call upon "the name of the Lord," even the Lord Jesus, who put himself in the sinner's place, and suffered for him unspeakable "sorrows and pains;" let him do this, and he shall be saved; and shall sing the praises of his Almighty Saviour, in the words of this beautiful Psalm.

5. *Gracious* is *the* LORD, *and righteous: yea, our*

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God is *merciful.* 6. *The* LORD *preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.*

In the salvation of a sinner we contemplate God's "grace," by which the work is effected; his "righ-"teousness," which causeth him to perform what he hath promised through Christ; his "mercy," which induced him to send his Son, and to make the promise. This mercy is the mercy of a parent, and such as a parent showeth to those young and "simple" ones, who have been over-reached and deceived by a crafty adversary; to those who fall, and are unable of themselves to rise again: "I was brought low, "and he helped me."

7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the* LORD *hath dealt bountifully with thee.* 8. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears,* and *my feet from falling.* 9. *I will walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living.*

That peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which the penitent experienceth, as the effect and fruit of pardon, afford him some idea of the rest and felicity of heaven; and, accordingly, he speaks as one translated to those happy mansions, where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, because there is no more sin. A Christian, delivered out of the miseries of this troublesome world, and at rest in Abraham's bosom, would express himself, as one should think, in these very terms. Remission of sins ought to be followed by newness of life, and the resolution of him whose "soul" hath been "de-"livered from death, his eyes from tears, and his

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"feet from falling," should always be this, "I will "walk before the LORD," as one under his inspection, "in the land of the living," or amongst the redeemed in the church; until the time come for me to depart hence, and to be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted;* 11. *I said in my haste, all men are liars.*

In affliction and distresses, those of the spirit and conscience more especially, the soul is tempted to despond, and can only be supported by faith exerting itself in prayer: "I believed, and therefore have I "spoken," or "therefore spake I," that is, as above, verse 4. "I called upon the name of the Lord; O "Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And this I did, though so "greatly afflicted," that I had "said in my haste," in my hurry and trepidation occasioned by fear and amazement, "all men are "liars;" there is no credit to be given to their promises of deliverance; I am lost and undone for ever. Yet my faith failed not entirely, and, lo, my prayer hath been heard and answered. St. Paul, relating the troubles which came upon him, and the manner in which he sustained them, thus cited a part of the 10th verse: "We, having the same spirit of faith, "according as it is written, I believed, and therefore "have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore "speak; knowing that he, which raised up the "Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and "shall present us with you." 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14.

12. *What shall I render unto the* LORD *for all*

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his benefits towards me? 13. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the* LORD. 14. *I will pay my vows unto the* LORD *now in the presence of all his people.*

The grateful penitent now asketh, what return he shall make to his kind Benefactor, for the most valuable of all blessings conferred upon him. And he presently resolveth to make the only return in his power, namely, to acknowledge and declare before men the goodness of Jehovah, ascribing all the glory where it is all due. This he determineth to do, by "taking the cup of salvation," which, as Dr. Hammond observes, among the Jews was two-fold; one offered in a more solemn manner in the temple; Numb. xxviii. 7.; the other more private in families, called the cup of thanksgiving, or commemoration of any deliverance, begun by the master of the family, and attended, on festival days, with a suitable hymn; such as was that sung by our Lord and his disciples on the night when he advanced that cup into the sacrament of his blood, which hath ever since been to Christians "the cup of salvation," and which all penitents should now receive in the church, with invocation, thanksgiving, and payment of the "vows" made in time of trouble.

15. *Precious in the sight of the* LORD is *the death of his saints.*

The notion of the original word, יקר in this place, for "rare," or "precious," must be so taken as not to signify that which is spoken of to be desirable to, or in the presence of, the Lord; for it is the life, not the death, of his servants which is precious,

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in that sense, to God, the preserver of their lives. But when it is said, that their "death is precious," it means in effect no more, than that it is so considered, it is rated at so high a price by God, as that he will not easily grant it to any one who most desires it of him.—Thus far Dr. Hammond. We may add, that much less will God be easily prevailed on to give up his people to death eternal. Rather will he work wonders of mercy and loving kindness to save them; as the penitent happily experienceth in himself.

16. *O* LORD, *truly I* am *thy servant, I* am *thy servant*, and *the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds.* 17. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the* LORD. 18. *I will pay my vows unto the* LORD *now in the presence of all his people.* 19. *In the courts of the* LORD'S *house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the* LORD.

Every penitent is the "servant" of God, "the "son of his handmaid," the church, "loosed from "his bonds," and redeemed from a state of slavery under sin, the world, and the devil, that he may serve a better Master, whose "yoke is easy, and his bur- "den light." This blessed Master is from thenceforth the object of his love, duty, and adoration: to him he "offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving," to him he "payeth his vows," among his fellow-servants in the church on earth; longing for that day to come when, loosed also from the bonds of death and the grave, he shall be admitted to sing hallelujahs with saints and angels, in the "courts" of the eternal

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temple, even "in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem," the holy, heavenly, and glorious city of God Most High!

PSALM CXVII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm, like the cxth, seems to be altogether prophetical of the joy that all the world should conceive, at the coming of the Messiah, to give salvation, first to the Jews, and then to all other nations, according to his faithful promise.

PATRICK.

1. *O praise the* LORD, *all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.* 2. *For his merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the* LORD endureth *for ever. Praise ye the* LORD.

It is remarkable, that of so short a Psalm one verse is quoted in the New Testament by St. Paul; the second verse is explained, though not quoted. Two questions naturally arise, upon reading the Psalm; first, who are the "nations and people," exhorted to praise Jehovah; secondly, what is that "merciful kindness," and that "truth," for which they are exhorted to praise him? The apostle hath given a satisfactory and decisive answer to both these questions, Rom. xv. 8, 9, &c. "Now, I say, that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for "the TRUTH of God, to confirm the promises made "unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glo-

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" rify God for his MERCY; as it is written, Praise " the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye " people." From the apostle's reasoning, the verse of our Psalm, which he hath cited, appears to be a proof that " the Gentiles," or the Heathen world, should one day " glorify God;" they are, therefore, the " people," whom the Psalmist, in the spirit of prophecy, exhorted to " praise Jehovah." It appears also, why the Gentiles were to glorify God; namely, for his " mercy" and " truth," shown in confirming or accomplishing the " promises" concerning their vocation and conversion, " made unto " the fathers*;" to Abraham, and his seed for ever; to all believers, whether of the circumcision, or the uncircumcision. Such, then, is the " merciful kind- " ness" of Jehovah, which is said, in the Psalm, to be " great," mighty, and powerful, " toward us;" such his " truth," which is affirmed to " endure for " ever;" as the promises were made good to the Gentiles, when the Jews, because of unbelief, had been cast off. Let the hallelujahs of the redeemed be suitable to that " mercy," and co-eternal with that " truth."

* " Confirmata—et veritas Domini"—Promiserat enim Abrahamo Deus futurum, ut per Christum, benedictum illud Abrahami semen, benedicerentur omnes Gentes, Gen. xii. 3. xv. 18. interprete Apostolo, Gal. iii. 16. Quod cum præstitum videamus, jam intelligimus verè advenisse Christum, ac promissa Dei firma esse omnia. BOSSUET.

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PSALM CXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, a king of Israel appears leading his people in solemn procession to the temple, there to offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, for the marvellous deliverance from his enemies, and a glorious victory gained over them. After inviting the whole nation, 1—4. to join with him upon this joyful occasion, he describeth at large, 5—18. his danger, and his deliverance from it, which latter is wholly attributed to the power and goodness of Jehovah. After this, as Mr. Mudge has rightly observed, there ensues a kind of sacred dialogue. Being come to the temple, the victorious monarch speaks the 19th verse; they that open the gate, the 20th; he again, as he enters, the 21st; they with him seem to speak the next four verses, to the 25th; the priests of the temple the 26th; the first part to the king, the other to the people; the people the 27th; he the 28th; the 29th is the chorus verse, concluding as it began. The repeated application made of the 22d verse in the New Testament, and the appointment of the Psalm, by the church, to be used on Easter-day, lead us to consider the whole as a triumphant

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hymn, sung by King Messiah, at the head of the Israel of God, on occasion of his resurrection and exaltation.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, *for* he is *good: because his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 2. *Let Israel now say, that his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 3. *Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 4. *Let them now that fear the* LORD, *say, that his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

The subjects of "thanksgiving" here proposed are Jehovah's "goodness" and his "mercy." He is the sole fountain of absolute and essential "good-"ness," the source of all excellency and perfection; and his "mercy" is the channel by which he communicateth this goodness, in an overflowing stream, to his people, who are, therefore, exhorted to praise him. The Christian church is now "the Israel of "God;" her ministers constitute the true "house of "Aaron," being the spiritual progeny of our great High Priest; and the Gentiles, not the Jews, are they who know and "fear Jehovah." Let these all celebrate, for these all have experienced, the benefits and blessings of "eternal mercy," by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

5. *I called upon the* LORD *in distress: the* LORD *answered me,* and set me *in a large place.*

The true value of every deliverance is to be estimated by the nature of the "distress" which required it. The rescue of David from his enemies, or that of Israel from captivity, might deservedly be extolled with the songs of Sion. How much more,

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then, is the church universal bound to lift up her voice in honour of Jehovah, who hath redeemed her from her spiritual adversaries, and freed her from the bondage of corruption, through Him who "died "for her sins, and rose again for her justification;" who, in the days of his flesh, being, on her account, in "distress" and affliction, "called upon Jehovah, "and was answered," by an "enlargement" from the narrow prison of the grave, to a boundless and glorious kingdom!

6. *The* LORD *is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?* 7. *The* LORD *taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see* my desire *upon them that hate me.*

By frequent experience of the divine power and mercy, from time to time exerted on the behalf of Israel, that nation was instructed to trust in Jehovah; and, whenever they did so, success and victory never failed to attend their steps. Would not the case be the same with us in all our undertakings, if our faith was right and steadfast in God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, and who hath promised to make us "more than conquerors?"

8. It is *better to trust in the* LORD, *than to put confidence in man.* 9. It is *better to trust in the* LORD, *than to put confidence in princes.*

Armies of "men," however numerous, and to appearance powerful, may be routed and dispersed at once. "Princes" may not be able to help us; if able, they may fail us, as not being willing to do it; if both able and willing, they may die, ere they can execute their purpose. But that hope which is

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placed in God, can never, by these, or any other means, be disappointed. As we so often repeat these two verses, let us act agreeably to the declaration which we then make, and, instead of courting the world, by undue compliances, for its deceitful smiles and treacherous favours, let us in all points do our duty, and leave the event to God above. To encourage us in the performance of such a resolution as this, let it be remembered, that because our Saviour "witnessed a good confession before Pontius "Pilate," and with meekness and patience resigned himself to the death of the cross for it, therefore God exalted him to glory and honour.

10. *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the* LORD *will I,* or, *I did, destroy them.* 11. *They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the* LORD *I will,* or, *I did, destroy them.* 12. *They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the* LORD *I will,* or, *I did, destroy them.*

The tenour of the Psalm being one of thanksgiving for a deliverance already experienced, seemeth to require that the verb, at the close of each of these verses, should be rendered in the past time; not "I "will destroy them," but "I did destroy them;" especially as it is said, "they compassed me about," and "they are quenched." As David and Israel were encompassed by hostile nations, over whom, through God's assistance, they often triumphed; so the Son of David, in the day of his passion, was surrounded by the furious multitude of Jews and

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Gentiles, seeking his life; and, after the same example, his mystical body, the church, hath frequently been, on all sides, vexed and persecuted in the world. But, through the power of Jehovah, Christ overcame, and is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The church, likewise, hath often risen superior to the efforts of her innumerable and malicious enemies, whose fury hath blazed forth against her with the sudden fierceness of "fire," when it is applied to a heap of dry "thorns;" and hath been as soon at an end; she hath triumphed, yea, and she will finally triumph, "in the name of the "Lord her God."

13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the* LORD *helped me.* 14. *The* LORD *is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.* 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the* LORD *doth valiantly.* 16. *The right hand of the* LORD *is exalted; the right hand of the* LORD *doth valiantly.*

The church may consider herself as victorious over her great adversary, the author of all evil, who had made his grand effort to effect her destruction, by putting to death her champion and king, Messiah. But Jehovah appeared at the time appointed, to bring him, and, virtually, all that should believe in him, from the dead. "Thou hast thrust sore at "me, that I might fall; but Jehovah helped me." Risen, therefore, with Christ, from the grave, we proceed to praise Jehovah in the words which Moses and Israel first used, when they had ascended from

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the depths of the sea, and beheld their enemies destroyed for ever; "Jehovah is my strength, and "my song, and is become my salvation:" Exod. xv. 2. And never doth that sacred day come round, on which the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated, but "the voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the "righteous;" there is a noise of them that sing for joy, in the camp of the saints; the church militant resoundeth with thanksgiving, and the voice of melody; paradise is restored below, and earth beareth some resemblance of heaven, while these transporting hymns are sung in honour of our great Redeemer. He is that "Arm and Right Hand of Jehovah" which hath "done valiantly," which hath crushed our strongest enemy, and is very highly "exalted" over all. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become "glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath "dashed in pieces the enemy." Exod. xv. 6.

17. *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the* LORD. 18. *The* LORD *hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.*

As Christ is risen, "we shall not die, but live;" we shall not die eternally, but we shall live, in this world, the life of grace; in the world to come, the life of glory; that we may, in both, "declare the "works" and chant the praises of God our Saviour. We are "chastened" for our sins, but "not given "over to death" and destruction everlasting; nay, our being "chastened" is now a proof that we are not so "given over;" for "what son is he whom "the father chasteneth not?" Heb. xii. 7.

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19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go in to them*, and *I will praise the* LORD: 20. *This gate*, or, *This is the gate, of the* LORD, *into which the righteous shall enter.* 21. *I will thank thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.*

The faithful, like David and his people of old, demand admission into the courts of the Lord's house, there to praise him for his great and manifold mercies. But we may extend our ideas much farther, and consider the whole company of the redeemed, as beholding the angels ready to unbar the gates of heaven, and throw open the doors of the eternal sanctuary, for the true disciples of the risen and glorified Jesus to enter in. "Open ye," may believers exclaim in triumph to those celestial spirits, who delight to minister to the heirs of salvation, "open "ye the gates of righteousness," those gates, through which nothing unclean can pass, "that the righteous "nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in," Isa. xxvi. 2. and sing, with your harmonious choirs, the praises of him who sitteth upon the throne; for he hath overcome the sharpness of death, he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. "THIS is the gate of the LORD, into which the "righteous shall enter," to take possession of the inheritance prepared for them, "to thank" him who hath "heard them, and is become their salvation."

22. *The stone* which *the builders refused, is become the head* stone *of the corner.* 23. *This is the* LORD'S *doing, it* is *marvellous in our eyes.*

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Whether this passage had first a reference to the case of David *, who, as a figure of Messiah, was brought from a state of rejection and persecution to the throne of Israel; or whether there be any truth in a Jewish tradition concerning a certain stone, which, after having been, by the builders of the second temple, thrown aside among the rubbish, was at last found to be exactly fitted for the honourable place of a chief corner-stone; it is neither possible nor needful to ascertain. That the verses belong, in a full proper sense, to Messiah, is confessed by the Rabbis, and acknowledged by all. No text in the Old Testament is quoted by the writers of the New, so often as this, which we meet with in six different places; namely, Matt. xxi. 42. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. Ephes. ii. 20. 1 Pet. ii. 4. The sum and substance of the New Testament applications and expositions is, that Jesus Christ is the stone here mentioned; that he was rejected and set at nought by the chief priests and Pharisees, the then builders of the church; but that, being chosen of God, and precious to him, this most valuable stone, thus despised and rejected of men, thus thrown among the rubbish, and buried in it, was, at length, from such a state, exalted to be the chief corner-stone in the building, the main support of the edifice, and a centre of union for Jew and Gentile, the two

* David a Saüle et aliquandiu à decem tribubus reprobatus, ac soli tribui Judæ agnitus, deinde omnium princeps; et sub figurâ ejus Christus à Judæis ac Gentibus impetitus, mox utroramque caput, ut ipse interpretatur, Matt. xxi. 42. BOSSUET.

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parts of which it consisted; that this was the work of God, and the admiration of man. And what can be more truly marvellous, than that a person, put to death as a malefactor, and laid in the grave, should from thence arise immortal, and become the head of an immortal society; should ascend into heaven, be invested with power, and crowned with glory; and should prepare a way for the sons of Adam to follow him into those mansions of eternal bliss?

24. *This* is *the day* which *the* LORD *hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Of the day on which Christ arose from the dead, it may, with more propriety than of any other day, be affirmed, "This is the day which Jehovah hath "made." Then it was, that the "rejected stone" became the "head of the corner." A morning then dawned which is to be followed by no evening; a brighter sun arose upon the world, which is to set no more; a day began, which will never end; and night and darkness departed, to return not again. For thus saith the Lord to his church by the prophet Isaiah, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord "shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of "thy mourning shall be ended:" Isa. lx. 20. Easter-day is in a peculiar manner consecrated to Him, who, by his resurrection, triumphed over death and hell. On that day, through faith, we triumph with him; we "rejoice and are glad in his salva-"tion."

25. *Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD: *O* LORD, *I beseech thee, send now prosperity.* 26. *Blessed* be

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he that cometh in the name of the LORD: *we have blessed you out of,* or, *you that are of, the house of the* LORD.

As a prelude to the triumphant manner in which Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, should ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem, he entered the earthly city, before his passion, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, who hailed him as King of Sion, and with palm-branches, the emblems of victory, in their hands, sung before him these words, partly taken from our Psalm, "Hosanna to the Son of David: "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the "Lord: Hosanna in the highest." The word "Ho-"sanna," is in the original, הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא, "Save now!" The form of words used by the people was both a petition and a congratulation; as if they had said, Let us beseech Jehovah, in the language of the cxviiith Psalm, to grant salvation to the Son of David, and to send us now prosperity under him: Blessed is he who thus cometh, not in his own name and power, but in the name and power of Jehovah, according to the prophecies concerning him, to deliver us from all our enemies: ratify, O Jehovah, in the highest, or in heaven, these petitions which we make for the salvation and prosperity of our King, that thy blessings upon him and us may be established on earth. Since the resurrection of our Lord, the faithful have expressed, in these two verses, the same wishes and prayers for the increase of his kingdom, and the prosperity of his house and family, of his ministers and his people: "We bless you that are "of the house of Jehovah."

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27. God is *the* LORD, *which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords,* even *unto the horns of the altar.*

As Jehovah hath manifested his power and glory, by raising Christ from the dead; as he hath, by so doing, "showed us the light" of life and immortality; let us observe the festival, which is designed to perpetuate the memory of so great and joyful an event. "Christ, our passover," saith an apostle, "is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast:" 1 Cor. v. 7. Let us keep it, only changing legal for evangelical sacraments and ceremonies; let us go to the altar, not to see a figure of the Lamb of God, as he was to be slain; but to behold a representation of him as he hath been slain; to behold, in figure, his body broken, and his blood poured out; to eat the bread of life, and drink the cup of salvation.

28. Thou art *my God, and I will praise thee: thou* art *my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the* LORD, *for* he is *good: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

The Prophet declareth his resolution to "praise" and to "exalt," to magnify and to glorify, his "God;" he then concludes, as he began, with exhorting all the world to do the same. Preserve to us, blessed Lord, the use of these divine hymns in thy church, until, at the resurrection of the just, we shall celebrate an Easter in heaven, and sing them new in the kingdom of God.

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXIX.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm is divided (most probably for the advantage of memory) according to the number of letters which compose the Hebrew alphabet, into twenty-two portions, of eight verses each; and not only every portion, but every verse of that portion, begins with the letter appropriated to it. David must, undoubtedly, have been the author. He describeth, in a series of devotional meditations, the instruction and the comfort which, through all vicissitudes of mind and fortune, he had ever found in the word of God. The many strong expressions of love towards the law, and the repeated resolutions and vows to observe it, will often force us to turn our thoughts to the true David, whose "meat and drink it was, to do the "will of him that sent him." The passages more especially characteristic of him, as well as those which allude primarily to any particular circumstances in the history of the patriarch David, are pointed out in the course of the comment. But the chief design through the whole hath been, to draw forth the lessons of heavenly wisdom and comfort, contained in this interesting composition,

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for the service of believers, who, while they are accomplishing their pilgrimage and warfare upon earth, should continually solace themselves with the cxixth Psalm, and repair to it as to a fountain, which can never be exhausted. Between the verses of each portion, a connexion is frequently to be traced; but it doth not often seem to extend from one portion to another. The many words employed to express the revelations of God's will have distinct significations, denoting different parts or portions of the Scriptures, which it hath sometimes been found of great use to take into consideration, while at others the terms appear to be used promiscuously, in a general sense, and for the sake of variety.

ALEPH.—PART I.

1. *Blessed* are *the undefiled*, Heb. *perfect*, or, *sincere, in the way, who walk in the law of the* LORD.

By sin, misery entered into the world; holiness alone, therefore, can lead us to happiness. "The "law of Jehovah" is the path of life, and by "walk- "ing in the way", we shall attain to the end. But, alas! we are out of the way; we have walked in the law of sin, after the lusts of the flesh; who will direct and strengthen us to walk in the law of God, after the desire of the Spirit? We are fallen from our integrity; who will raise us again? The Gospel, which was preached to Abraham before the Mosaic

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dispensation, and which was prefigured and believed under it, returneth us, to all these questions, answers of peace. The Redeemer hath prevailed for the pardon of our errors; the Redeemer hath raised us from our fallen state; he hath reconducted us to the path of life; in his name we arise and walk; he maketh us righteous, and, consequently, he maketh us "blessed." For, "Blessed are the sincere in the "way, who walk in the law of Jehovah."

2. *Blessed* are *they that keep his testimonies*, and that *seek him with their whole heart.*

The divine revelations and institutions, whether of the old or the new law, are called God's "testi- "monies;" they are the witnesses of his will, and the pledges of his love. They are committed to the church, as a precious deposit, or trust, to be by her children "kept," and observed. In and by these God is to be sought; "they that seek him with their "whole heart," with ardent and undivided affection, fail not to find him, as an instructor and a comforter; and they who find him, find all things, and are "blessed" indeed.

3. *They also* that *do no iniquity*, they that *walk in his ways.*

O blissful state of those, who are redeemed from the earth, and all earthly desires; who are delivered from the dominion of sin; who "follow the Lamb "whithersoever he goeth," and, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, "walk in the statutes and ordinances of "the Lord blameless:" Luke i. 6. Enrol us, O Lord, in the happy number of these thy servants; pardon our offences; give us a new nature, and new

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desires, averse from sin, and inclined to sanctity: and guard us, that the wicked one touch us not.

4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

He who made us, and redeemed us, hath a double right to our service. We are not our own, having been bought with the blood of our Lord; his will, therefore, and not our own, is to be done by us. And his will is, that we should "keep his precepts "diligently," because in "keeping" them, and in keeping them "diligently," so as not to halt between God and the world, but to serve one master only, doth our happiness consist. Now, when the commands of our Superior, and our greatest Benefactor, of our Friend, our Father, and our God, coincide with our own interests, temporal and eternal, what pretext can there be for disobedience and rebellion?

5. *O that my ways were directed,* or, *prepared and established, to keep thy statutes!*

The faithful soul, enraptured with the contemplation of that blessedness which is the consequence of serving God, but conscious, at the same time, of an inability to attain it, sighs after the refreshing and strengthening influences of divine grace. She beholdeth her Saviour afar off; she beholdeth the beauty and glorious majesty of his heavenly kingdom; she beholdeth the way which leads to it; but she hath not power to walk therein. This consideration caused her to groan earnestly within herself, and at length to breathe forth a wish that the Spirit of truth and love would fix and establish her in a holy course of thinking, speaking, and acting, upon

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all occasions, and would prevent her from turning aside out of it, to the right hand or to the left.

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

All the commandments have the same author, and the same sanction. He who thinketh to atone for the breach of one, by the observation of another; he who reserveth to himself a licence of indulging any favourite, darling lust, while, in general, he preserveth the appearance of an exemplary conduct, is a hypocrite, and, unless he repent, will be brought to "shame," if not before men here, yet before men and angels hereafter. "Shame" is the fruit of sin; confidence is the effect of righteousness. Wherefore, in all our proceedings, let us "have respect," not to the opinions of men, to the corrupt customs of the world, or to the deceitful suggestions of our own hearts, but "to the commandments, to all "the commandments of God;" let us, as St. John exhorteth, "abide in Christ;" that when he shall "ap-"pear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed "before him at his coming." 1 John ii. 28.

7. *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgements.*

Confidence in God will always be productive of joy, and undissembled "praise" will accompany true conversion. The Scriptures are styled God's "righ-"teous judgements," as containing an account of his decrees and determinations concerning us, with a history of cases and precedents, entered upon record for our admonition. By these we are to form our opinions, and to regulate our conduct. And when

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we shall have so "learned" these, as to walk according to them, we shall praise God with an "upright heart;" our tongues will utter what our hearts feel.

8. *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

The result of our meditations on God's word, and on the advantages of studying, in order to observe its directions, should always be a resolution so to do, and a prayer for grace to execute that resolution. Lord, we "will keep thy statutes;" for love can do all things, when thou hast shed it abroad in our hearts. "Love worketh no ill; therefore love is "the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10.; and mercy will accept what grace enableth us to perform. Be thou, therefore, ever with us, and "forsake us not;" or if, at any time, to try our faith, and to exercise our patience, thou shouldest depart from us and leave us to ourselves for a time, short be thy absence, and speedy thy return: "O forsake us not utterly!"

BETH.—PART II.

9. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed* thereto *according to thy word.*

Youth enters upon the journey of life, headstrong and inexperienced, with a bias of original corruption, and all the passions awake. In such circumstances, how shall a young man direct his steps, so as to "escape the pollution that is in the world through "lust?" 2 Pet. i. 4. He must, for this purpose, take with him the directions to be found in the Scriptures

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of truth. "I have written unto you young men," says the beloved disciple, "because ye are strong, and "the word of God abideth in you, and ye have over-"come the wicked one." He who became man for our salvation, passed through this state of youth, undefiled, that he might, as it were, reclaim and consecrate it anew to God. Let every young man often meditate on this circumstance.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

Despairing of sufficient assistance from any other quarter, because no one else can either show us the way to heaven, or enable us to walk therein, even if it could be shown, "with our whole heart have we "sought thee," O God, thy direction, and thine aid; and thou hast promised, that they who "seek shall "find:" like sheep without a shepherd are we given to stray; O preserve us from error in principle, and in practice; let us not wander from thy "com-"mandments."

11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

The young man who would cleanse his way, and take heed according to God's word, must "lay up "that word in his heart;" for from the heart are the "issues of life," the thoughts, the words, and the actions; when God ruleth in the heart by his word and Spirit, these become his subjects; then "the "kingdom of heaven is within us," and all is obedience, peace, and love. Thou art our King, O Lord Jesu; suffer no usurper to possess thy place in our

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affections; permit no other Lord to have dominion over us.

12. *Blessed art* thou, *O* LORD: *teach me thy statutes.*

He who is "blessed" can make us so: he who delighteth to communicate "blessing," will do it, if we ask him by "teaching us his statutes," which conform us to his nature, that we may live his life, and bless his name for ever. When the word of God is our lesson, the Spirit of God must be our Master.

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgements of thy mouth.*

The best sign that God hath "taught us his statutes," and the greatest inducement to him to teach us still more and more, is a readiness to make others partakers of those blessings, which we ourselves have received from him. Jehovah fashions the "lips" of man, and he expects that they should be employed in his service. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the stream will always show the nature of the fountain. When we make the Scriptures the subject of our conversation, we glorify God, we edify our neighbours, and we improve ourselves.

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as* much as *in all riches.*

Truth and holiness afford to the sincere believer a pleasure more exquisite, as well as more solid and enduring, than that which a miser feels at the acquisition of his darling wealth. Let us no longer envy

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the joys of worldly men, no longer be chagrined at the prosperity of the wicked. The "true riches" we may always acquire; and, surely, as much as the heaven is higher than the earth, so much are heavenly joys above earthly, in kind, degree, and duration.

15. *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

Meditation is that exercise of the mind, whereby it recalls a known truth, as some kinds of creatures do their food, to be ruminated upon, until all the nutritious parts are extracted, and fitted for the purposes of life. By study we lay in knowledge, by meditation we reduce that knowledge to practice. And we have then duly "meditated on God's precepts," when in all our proceedings we "have respect unto his ways," comparing our actions with the rule of his word.

16. *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

By frequent meditation and continual practice, the divine "statutes" will become our "delight;" and from the pleasures, as well as from the cares of the world, we shall gladly fly to THEM for recreation and comfort. Of holy exercises there is great variety, and spiritual joys are without number. Lord, make us to "delight ourselves in thy statutes," and when we delight in what we learn, we shall easily retain it in memory; "we shall not forget thy word."

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GIMEL.—PART III.

17. *Deal bountifully with thy servant,* that *I may live, and keep thy word.*

In the foregoing parts of the Psalm, we have heard the believer declaring the excellency of God's word, and expressing both his desire and his resolution to observe its directions. He now beseecheth God to remove all impediments, and to accomplish this work in him. And as a man must "live," in order to "work," the first petition is, that God would "deal with his servant" according to the measures of grace and mercy, enabling him to "live" the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man, to "keep the word" of truth, and to walk in the commandments of his blessed Master all his days.

18. *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

So far are we naturally from being able to "keep" the word, that we are not able to understand it. The law of God is full of divine and spiritual truths, concealed under literal histories, visible signs, and external ceremonies. To discern these, נִפְלָאוֹת, "wondrous," because the hidden, mysterious "things," our "eyes," the eyes of our understanding, must be "unveiled;" that "veil" must be taken off, which St. Paul affirmeth to be upon the hearts of the Jews, "in reading the Old Testament," and which will continue there, until they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Then the veil will be taken away, and they will behold him, and the redemption by him, as prefigured in their law, and foretold by their prophets*. Pride, prejudice, and interest, will compose a veil, through which a Christian shall see as little of the New Testament, as a Jew doth of the Old. Lord, convince us of our blindness, and restore us to our sight.

19. *I* am *a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.*

The above request for divine illumination is enforced by this argument, that the petitioner is a "stranger," and a sojourner upon "the earth;" he is travelling through a foreign country, to his native city, where are his kindred, his treasure, and his heart; as a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; as a stranger, he is fearful of losing his way; on these accounts he requesteth, that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts, by affording the light of heaven; that he would not "hide his commandments," but show and teach them those steps, by which he may ascend towards heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory.

20. *My soul breaketh for the longing* that it hath *unto thy judgements at all times.*

* "Revela oculos meos:" aperi, dispelle umbras, tolle velamentum, quo spirituales oculi conteguntur. "Considerabo mirabilia:" ut penitùs introspiciam, non literam tantùm, ac velut corticem legis, sed arcana spiritualia, puta in saboatis requiem sempiternam, simplicitatem in azymis, in victimis obedientiam, et ubique Christum. BOSSUET.

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Another argument here urged, is that "long-"ing" desire which the soul hath, during her state of pilgrimage below, unto the revelation of God's will. Grieved and vexed at the prospect of sin, vanity, and folly, and finding nothing below that will satisfy the desires of an immortal spirit, she setteth her affections on the better things above, which are proposed in the Scriptures as the proper objects of our wishes. Her appetite for the divine Word is keen, as that of hunger or thirst, and "hope deferred "maketh the heart sick." This disposition is not a transient fit, but it is constant and uniform "at all "times."

21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud* that are *cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

The consideration of the wretched condition of impenitent sinners, is another reason, why we entreat God to set and to keep us in the way of his commandments. "Pride" produceth "error," and obstinacy in that error; obstinate transgressors reject the call, the covenant, and the terms, of the Gospel; to such the "curse" of the law is ratified and sealed, and mercy consigns them over to justice, which seldom fails to give them some "rebukes" even in this world, for a foretaste to them, and a warning to others.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

"Reproach and contempt" are liberally bestowed by the world upon men who, being not of it, reprove its deeds by their exemplary conduct. These, to beginners more especially, are sore lets and hin-

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derances in the way of duty; and, after the example of David, we may beseech God to "remove" them from us, when we suffer them in his cause, and know ourselves to be innocent of the crimes laid to our charge. In the mean time, to comfort ourselves under them, let us remember, that HE, who alone, in the strict and unlimited sense of the words, could say, "I have kept thy testimonies," sustained the utmost degree of "reproach and contempt" for our sakes, and was patient and resigned under it all, until God "removed" it from him by a glorious resurrection. There remaineth likewise a resurrection for the mystical body of Christ; and then, "Wisdom will be justified of all her children."

23. *Princes also did sit* and *speak against me:* but *thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

"Princes" and rulers have often "sate" in council upon the "servants" of God, and "spoken," in judgement, false things "against them," as they did against their blessed Master in the days of his flesh. David hath taught us how to act in such circumstances. We are not to renounce the creed, or the commandments, should it so happen that "the rulers "and the Pharisees" neither believe the former, nor observe the latter; but rather, we should "meditate," more than ever, in the Scriptures; that we may draw from thence comfort in the troubles, and direction in the difficulties, which persecution bringeth upon us; always bearing in mind, when princes command any thing contrary to the word of God, that our service is due to a higher Master; "THY "SERVANT did meditate in thy statutes."

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24. *Thy testimonies also* are *my delight,* and *my counsellors.*

Pleasure and wisdom, as the world hath ordered matters, are almost incompatible; insomuch that Solomon, relating the experience he had had of voluptuousness, mentions it as a thing out of the ordinary course, that "his wisdom" all the time "remained with him;" Eccles. ii. 9. But they who meditate in the word of God, find a pleasure, which hath wisdom for its inseparable companion. Their sorrow is dispelled, and their doubts are resolved. For how can he be sorrowful, who sits by the fountain of joy? How can he be long in doubt, who hath the prophets and apostles for his counsellors?

DALETH.—PART IV.

25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

The Psalmist, in a state of affliction and humiliation, still seeketh relief, by prayer, from the Scriptures. His circumstances vary, but his affection to the word of God continueth the same. Every one, whose affections are set on things below, hath reason to exclaim with David, "My soul cleaveth to the "dust." From this kind of death we are "quickened," or made alive, by the Gospel, through that same Spirit which raised Christ from the dead, and which shall raise us also at the last day. Then soul and body, perfected together, shall take their final farewell of earth, and ascend to heaven, where the soul shall

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feel no passion but the love of God, and the body shall have no employment but to express it.

26. *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me; teach me thy statutes.*

We should freely and ingenuously "declare" to God in prayer for our sins, our temptations, our sorrows, and our undertakings; it argues love, confidence, and sincerity, so to do; it is a means of acquainting us with our own state, of which generally we are ignorant; and it will not fail to procure us those aids from above, of which we stand in need. God will "hear" us; he will pardon our offences, strengthen us in our trials, dispel our grief, and prosper the work of our hands upon us. These mercies, when received, should incline us to walk worthy of them, and, for that purpose, to beg the farther instruction and direction of the divine Spirit; "I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me—"teach me thy statutes."

27. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall I talk*, or, *meditate, of thy wondrous works*, or, *thy mysteries.*

The heart of the troubled Psalmist is intent upon duty, and the deliverance which he chiefly requesteth is that from ignorance and error. True knowledge cometh from God, and it cannot be too often desired of him. It is pleasant as the light, extensive as the heavens, and more profitable than the treasures of eastern kings. He who is led to "understand" the celestial "mysteries" of the Scriptures, will never want subjects for "meditation," and should

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never permit those subjects either to slip out of his mind, or to lie unimproved in it.

28. *My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according to thy word.*

Let us not marvel, if sin bring us to the knowledge of sorrow, since he who "knew no sin," was yet, on our account, so intimately "acquainted with "grief." In the garden, his soul "melted for heavi-"ness," and there appeared an angel from heaven "strengthening him:" Luke xxii. 43. Our transgressions deserve an eternity of sorrow; let us not, therefore, repine at any part of it that may fall to our share in time. No, blessed Jesu! let us suffer with thee, as both a means and a pledge of our future glorification with thee. Only "strengthen us, "according to" the promises in "thy word." In this life, all we ask is faith and patience; faith, to assure us that thou orderest all things for the best; and patience, to preserve that faith. These were the provisions with which thy best-beloved servants of old travelled through this mortal life. Enable us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, to do the same; that so, when the days of our earthly pilgrimage shall be happily accomplished, we may sit down, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in thy heavenly kingdom.

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.* 30. *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgements have I laid* before me.

It is plain that "the way of truth," in the latter of these two verses, is opposed to "the way of

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"lying," or of falsehood, in the former. The one comprehends every thing in doctrine and practice that is right, and therefore "true;" the other denotes every thing which is wrong, and therefore "false." Of these two ways man hath his choice. God points out to him the former by his word, and offers to conduct him in it by his Spirit. Satan shows him the latter, and endeavours to seduce him into it by his temptations. The Psalmist declareth himself to have "chosen" God's way, and to have "laid" the Scriptures "before him," as the chart by which he was to direct his course. He therefore prays that the other way may be far "removed" from him; and that God would vouchsafe him such a thorough acquaintance with the "way" of truth, as might prevent him from ever wandering into the path of error. How much depends upon the road we choose! How difficult is it, in a divided and distracted world, to choose aright! Yet this choice, so important, so difficult, frequently remains to be made by us, when we have neither judgement to choose, nor strength to travel!

31. *I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O* LORD, *put me not to shame.*

Having once chosen our road, it remains that we persevere in it; since better had it been for us never to have known the way of truth, than to forsake it, when known; and we have the same reasons to go on, which induced us to begin; nay, though the love of the world may require novelty and variety to support it, yet, in the blessed union of the soul with

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its Redeemer, true affection will increase with time and acquaintance. The Psalmist doth not only say, "I have followed," but "I have stuck unto, thy "testimonies;" I have adhered so closely and firmly to them, that temptation has in vain essayed to allure, and persecution has vainly attempted to force, me from them. And therefore he beseecheth God so to continue his grace and favour, that he may never, by falling from his steadfastness, disgrace his Master, his cause, his brethren, himself, nor be put to shame at the last day. "O LORD, put me not "to shame!"

32. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

The true Christian is always proceeding in the way of godliness, though not always with equal pace. In grief, whether for temporal or spiritual losses, the heart is contracted, and the spirits are all summoned home to comfort and support it, so that the faculties are left feeble and sluggish; and then the progress can be but slow. This was the Psalmist's case. But even then he promises, that, when God, by sending him joy and gladness, should "enlarge his heart," dilate his spirits, and put life and strength into his actions, he would quicken his pace in proportion, and, with renewed vigour and alacrity, "run the "way" of the divine "commandments," until it should have brought him to rest and felicity in the bosom of God.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

HE.—PART V.

33. Teach me, O LORD, *the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it* unto *the end.*

Instruction from above is necessary for the children of God, while they continue in this world. The more we know, the more we shall desire to know; we shall beg a daily supply of grace, as well as of bread; and a taste of the cluster of Eschol will make us long after the vintage of Canaan: Numb. xiii. 23. Religion is the art of holy living, and then only known when it is practised; as he is not a master of music who can read the notes which compose it, but he who has learned how to take a lesson readily from the book, and play it on his instrument; after which, the pleasure it affords will be a sufficient motive for continuing so to do. "Teach me, O "Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it "unto the end.

34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my *whole heart.*

Much "understanding" is needful in order to the "observation" of the law, that we may know what is commanded, and what is forbidden, and how far; that we may avoid the snares laid for us in the way of duty; that we may respect things according to their due rank and worth; that we may do good works in their proper time, place, and manner; above all, that the affections may be directed by the judgement, and not the judgement by the affections.

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The law cannot be observed, unless it be understood; and it is understood in vain, unless it be observed; or rather, if it be indeed understood, if there be upon the mind, at all times, a full conviction of divine truths, and their excellency, not only in themselves, but compared with the offers of the world, the flesh, and the devil, then it will certainly operate in hearty obedience. "Give me understanding, and I shall "keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole "heart."

35. *Make me to go*, or, *conduct me, in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*

He who teacheth us the way to heaven, must also "conduct" us in it, and the same grace must give light and strength. The Scripture is our rule, the Spirit is our guide; and, from beginning to end, it is God who inclines, prepares, and enables us "to "go in the" clean and pleasant "path of his com- "mandments;" a path which leads us far from the noise and pollution of the world, through a paradise of promises and comforts, grateful as the fragrance of early spring, or the incense ascending from the holy altar. Happy the soul that can say to God, "therein "do I delight:" which is, at the same time, a reason for her to ask, and for him to grant, a continuance and perseverance therein.

36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

The wit of man may conceive, and his tongue may utter, great things of God and holiness, while his heart is averse from both; therefore David saith, not only "give me understanding," but "incline

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"my heart." Our true characters are formed by the desires of our hearts, which, not finding satisfaction in themselves, must seek it in something without them. The world offers itself first; and custom, as well as nature, inclineth us to the love of that, and of money, which commandeth all things in it. Such love is contrary to the love of God, being one of the thorns which choke the seed, and render it unfruitful. Therefore the Psalmist requesteth, that his heart may be "inclined to the divine testimonies, "and not to covetousness." And as God only can change the disposition of the heart, to God he preferreth his petition. It is to be observed, that by the words, "Incline not my heart to covetousness," is meant, "suffer not my heart to be inclined," or, "give it not over, to covetousness."

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity:* and *quicken thou me in thy way.*

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" and what is there else on earth to behold? What is there which, when possessed, doth not disappoint the expectation conceived of it, the possessors themselves being judges? Solomon took an inventory of the world, and all the best things in it; he cast up the account, and the sum total was VANITY. The "eye" is the grand inlet of temptation, and by "be-"holding," we come to desire and long after, the objects of sense; from which time our affection toward the objects of faith waxeth cold. "Turn away our "eyes," therefore, O Lord, "from beholding vanity, "and quicken us in thy way;" mortify the flesh, and the spirit shall live.

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38. *Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who* is devoted *to thy fear.*

The "word" here intended is the word of promise, which the believer entreateth God to "stablish," confirm, or accomplish, to him by his sanctification, that so he may walk in the way of truth and life. He pleadeth his title to the promise, as a "servant" of God, and one who "feared" to offend him.

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgements* are *good.*

The "reproach" which we have all most reason to dread, and to pray that God would keep far from us here and hereafter, is that of having forsaken and apostatized from those statutes and "judgements" revealed in the Scriptures, which we own to be so "good," so pleasant, and so profitable.

40. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

The Psalmist appealeth to God, the searcher of hearts, for the truth of the protestation he was about to make, that the desire of his soul was toward the divine Word; not only toward the promises, to believe and embrace them, but also toward the "precepts," to observe and to do them. He therefore prayeth, with confidence, that God would finish the work he had begun, and enable him to carry his wishes into execution, by continually "quickening" and enlivening him more and more through grace, to finish his course in "righteousness," and to obtain that crown which is to be the reward of it.

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VAU.—PART VI.

41. *Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD, even *thy salvation, according to thy word.*

Persecution and affliction, of which they never fail, in some way or other, to have their share who live godly in Christ Jesus, should teach us like David, to fly for refuge to that "mercy," from whence proceedeth all "salvation," temporal and eternal; and to pray, without ceasing, for the accomplishment of that "Word," which promiseth to the people of God deliverance out of all their troubles.

42. *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.*

A believer, trusting in the promises of God, when the whole world hath forsaken him, and no sign or probability appears of their being fulfilled, is always, among the wicked, an object of scorn and "reproach." Such was David, when Shimei cursed him. Such was our blessed Master, when men said, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let "him deliver him now if he will have him." And his disciples are not to expect better usage. "Therefore," saith one of them "we both labour and suffer "reproach, because we trust in the living God:" 1 Tim. iv. 10. To silence these reproaches, we beseech God to manifest his mercy in our salvation. The resurrection of Jesus was an "answer" to his blasphemers; and the mouth of all wickedness will be stopped at the last day.

43. *And take not the word of truth utterly out*

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of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgements.

In the mean time, while affliction presseth hard upon us, while our deliverance is deferred, and the enemy is suffered to reproach and blaspheme, our prayer must be, that God would give us courage and utterance, still to confess him before men, and boldly to speak his "word of truth," for the edification of some, and the confutation of others; as knowing, that our faith is not vain, nor shall we be disappointed of our "hope," since both are built upon the "judgements," or revealed decrees, of him who can neither err nor deceive.

44. *So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever.*

By means of strength and power from above, we shall be enabled to serve God, in adversity, as well as in prosperity; and amidst all difficulties and dangers, into which the path of duty may lead us, Charity will persevere in it, till, arriving at the gate of heaven, and there taking leave of her companions and fellow-travellers, Faith and Hope, she shall enter those blissful regions, to perform to eternity that perfect will of God, which the infirmities of fallen nature prevented her from having so fully performed here below.

45. *And I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.*

No external pressure can take away that spiritual "liberty," which the faithful Christian experienceth when he hath made an open confession of the truth, and determined at all events to do his duty. Then

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he is no longer straitened by fear, but set at large by love. "The truth maketh him free, and he "walketh in the liberty of the children of God," a liberty which they only obtain "who seek his pre-"cepts," and, by the performance of them, are rescued from the bondage both of tyrannical desires and slavish fears.

46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

A prophet may be called "before kings," either in the course of his office, to instruct them, or else in a judiciary way, to give an account of his faith. In either case, if he "walketh at liberty, he will "speak of God's testimonies," with due reverence to the person and authority of his prince, but as one who is neither afraid nor "ashamed" to declare the whole counsel of heaven to any being upon earth.

47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and I will meditate in thy statutes.

He who would preach boldly to others, must himself "delight" in the practice of what he preacheth. If there be in us a new nature, it will "love the "commandments of God," as being congenial to it: on that which we love, we shall continually be "me-"ditating;" and our meditation will end in action; we shall "lift up the hands which hang down," Heb. xii. 12. that they may "work the works of God, "while it is day; because the night cometh, when "no man can work." John ix. 4.

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ZAIN.—PART VII.

49. *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

God promiseth salvation before he giveth it, to excite our desire of it, to exercise our faith, to prove our sincerity, to perfect our patience. For these purposes, he seemeth to have sometimes forgotten his word, and to have deserted those whom he had engaged to succour and relieve; in which case, he would have us, as it were, to remind him of his promise, and solicit his performance of it. The Psalmist here instructeth us to prefer our petition upon these grounds; first, that God cannot prove false to his own word; "Remember the word unto "thy servant:" secondly, that he will never disappoint an expectation which himself hath raised; "upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

50. *This* is *my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.*

While performance is delayed, we "rejoice in hope;" Rom. xii. 12. and the promise is our "comfort in affliction;" a comfort, divine, strong, lasting; a comfort, that will not, like all others, fail us when we most want it, in the day of sickness, and at the hour of death; but will always keep pace with our necessities, increasing in proportion as the pleasures of the world and the flesh decrease in us, and then becoming complete, when they are no more. So powerful is the word of God to revive us, when

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dead, either in sins or in sorrow; "thy word hath "quickened me."

51. *The proud have had me greatly in derision:* yet *have I not declined from thy law.*

A true servant of God believeth the promises, and practiseth the precepts, of his blessed Master. The haughty infidel will scoff at him for one part of his conduct; the insolent worldling will ridicule him for the other. But nether will induce him to disbelieve, or to disobey. Let us be certain that we have the divine "law" for our warrant in what we believe, and in what we do; and then, let not the "derision "of the proud" prevail upon us to "decline from "it."

52. *I remembered thy judgements of old, O* LORD; *and have comforted myself.*

The great remedy against that temptation which ariseth from the reproaches of our scornful and insulting adversaries, is here prescribed, namely, a "remembrance of God's judgements of old," whether we understand the "judgements" of his mouth, or those of his hand; his righteous decrees for the punishment of bad, and reward of good men, or the many and wonderful instances of his executing those decrees, from the beginning of the world, recorded in the sacred history. These are sources of real and endless "comfort" upon such occasions; because nothing can happen to us, which hath not happened to God's people "of old;" no case, of which there is not a precedent in Scripture, where we may read the process of similar trials, their issue, and the final sentence of the judge, who is still the

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same, and whose rule of procedure and determination is invariable.

53. *Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.*

The consequence of a due meditation on God's judgements, will be a compassion for the "wicked," on whom those judgements, in the end, fall; so that instead of feeling for ourselves, on account of the injuries they do us, we shall feel for them, who are thereby drawing down vengeance and destruction on their own heads. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said the blessed Jesus, when led to be crucified, "weep "not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your "children." Luke xxiii. 28.

54. *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*

The soul, which descended from above, and longs to return thither again, is a stranger and sojourner upon earth. The body is "the house of her pilgrim-"age," in which she is confined during her state of exile. And, how harsh soever the usage may be which she receiveth from the world, she ever findeth joy and comfort, as once did the fugitive and wandering son of Jesse, in making God's "statutes" the subjects of her psalms, and hymns, and spiritual "songs," until death shall restore her to liberty. Then, ascending to heaven from whence she came, and, like the early lark, singing as she ascends, she will seek her native abode, there to celebrate her redemption from the earth, and to chant forth the praises of Him who hath redeemed her, in a new song, before the throne.

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55. *I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night, and have kept thy law.*

By the "name" of God, his nature, so much at least of it as we are concerned to know, and are capable of receiving, is revealed to us. Such a love had the Psalmist for it on that account, that, as in the day God's statutes were his songs, in the night God's name was the subject of his meditation. With his tongue he praised him in the day, with his heart he desired him in the night watches. At night, the dissipation, noise, and hurry of business, cease; external silence produceth internal calmness and composure, inviting us to celestial contemplation; the world is dead to us, and we are dead to the world; the soul is then most alive, and seemeth to experience a foretaste of that time, when the body and its concerns shall no more molest and impede her. The good effect of hours thus secretly passed in holy exercises, will appear openly in our lives and conversations: "I have remembered thy name, O "LORD, in the night, and," as the fruit of it, "have "kept thy law."

56. *This I had, because I kept thy commandments.*

As one sin is often the consequence and the punishment of another, so one act of obedience is the issue and the reward of another; and, to him who hath well used the grace already received, shall more be given. "This I had," this ability to perform my duty, and to delight in the performance of it day and night, was vouchsafed unto me, "because I kept "thy commandments," because I was not heretofore

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disobedient, but employed the strength with which thou, O Lord, hast endued me, not in doing mine own will, but thine.

CHETH.—PART VIII.

57. Thou art *my portion, O* LORD: *I have said that I would keep thy words.*

Happy the man, who can sincerely say, "Thou "art my portion, O LORD;" I have considered, and made my choice; from henceforth, I renounce all things for the love of thee; thou art sufficient for me; thee only I desire to enjoy, and, therefore, thee only I desire to please; "I have said that I "would keep thy words."

58. *I entreated thy favour with* my *whole heart: be merciful unto me, according to thy word.*

He who hath chosen God for "his portion," will earnestly seek his "favour," and the light of his countenance; he who hath promised and vowed to "keep the words" of God, hath need to seek that favour and that light, that he may have grace and power to fulfil his engagements. Mercy is the sole fountain of every good gift for which we ask, and God's promise the only ground upon which we ask it: "be merciful unto me, according to thy word."

59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*

The Psalmist did not content himself with barely praying for strength and grace, but his faith, relying on the word of promise, put itself in motion. He considered his "ways," his course of thinking, speaking, and acting; how far he had proceeded in it,

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and whither it led him; and this consideration produced a conversion of the whole man, of the heart and its affections, from the creature to the Creator, as he hath revealed himself in the Scriptures of truth: "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

60. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

A true penitent suffereth no time to be lost between his good resolutions and the performance of them. "Draw me," saith the church, "and we "will RUN after thee:" Cant. i. 4. Andrew, Peter, and others, stayed not for a second call from Christ, but followed him immediately upon the first. By deferring our return to duty, we lose many comfortable fruits, which it would have produced both in ourselves and others, while the difficulties of ever returning, and the danger of never returning, are daily and hourly increasing.

61. *The bands*, or, *troops, of the ungodly have robbed me;* but *I have not forgotten thy law.*

To be robbed, or plundered of his possessions in this world, was by no means a case peculiar to David. The primitive Christians were continually so treated; and our Lord gives all his disciples warning to stand prepared for such events, ready in disposition, in heart and mind, to quit all, as they who first followed him literally did. The apostle tells us of some, who not only bore patiently, but even "took joyfully, the spoiling of their goods:" the reason he assigns for so extraordinary a behaviour, deserves to be noted and remembered; "knowing that they had in heaven a better and an "enduring substance:" Heb. x. 34. They who

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part with earth to gain heaven, and exchange the world for its Maker, certainly lose nothing by the bargain. Nay, there will come an hour, when, for that forestaste of glory which a good conscience affordeth to its happy possessor, the dearest lover of mammon would joyfully give up all the gold of Peru, and all the diamonds of Indostan.

62. *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgements.*

So far were temporal losses from causing the Psalmist to forsake God, that he sought him the more earnestly and fervently on that account, rising "at midnight to give thanks" for all his "righteous "judgements" and dispensations towards his servants. Thus Paul and Silas, not only impoverished, but imprisoned, for the testimony of Jesus, yet in that situation, with their feet fast in the stocks, sang "praises at midnight," thereby turning their night into day, and their prison into a paradise; when, lo, their hallelujahs ascended to heaven, and God arose to judgement; the earth trembled, the doors were opened, the chains fell off, the gaoler and his family were converted, and the apostles set at liberty. And although there be no obligation upon men to "rise at "midnight," in order to "give thanks;" yet, if they who awake at that, or any other time, would accustom their hearts, at least, to so divine an exercise, they would find it always productive of the most comfortable effects.

63. *I* am *a companion of all* them *that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

As no sufferings should make us neglect our intercourse with God, so neither should they tempt us to

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forsake the communion of saints, or fellowship of them who "fear God, and work righteousness." These are knit together in love, as members of the same mystical body, insomuch that "if one member "suffer, or be honoured, all the members should "suffer or be honoured with it;" these we should own at all times, in prosperity and in adversity; with these should our acquaintance and conversation be, for the mutual improvement and consolation of them and of ourselves. Of such was David a "companion," and such the Redeemer himself "is "not ashamed to call brethren." Heb. ii. 11.

64. *The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.*

Heaven and earth, and all that are therein, declare from day to day, the "mercy" of their Creator and Preserver, which is "over all his "works." And his goodness, thus displayed through the outward and visible world, forbids us to doubt of his loving kindness towards those immortal spirits, which, in tenements of mortal clay, make, for a while, their abode here below; during which short period, they beseech him earnestly to grant them such a portion of that saving knowledge, which is his gift, as may secure to them, when they shall depart hence, a place in a happier country, and a more enduring city. "Teach me thy statutes!"

TETH.—PART IX.

65. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD, *according to thy word.*

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As the sense of our wants should prepare the mind for prayer, so gratitude for blessings received should tune the heart to praise. In preferring our petitions, self-love may sometimes have a share; but thankfulness is the offspring of an ingenuous spirit, and the love of God. Let a man carefully recount the divine mercies shown to him from his birth, considering withal how unworthy he hath been of the least of those mercies, as also how far preferable his state is to that of many others; and he will find reason "in all things to give thanks," to acknowledge, with David, the goodness and truth of Jehovah, and to say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy "servant, O LORD, according to thy word."

66. *Teach me good judgement and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.*

From thanksgiving, the Psalmist returneth again to prayer, as, while we continue in this world, we must all do. The gift, for which he now prayeth, is that of "a good judgement with knowledge;" as the former must enable us to make a proper use of the latter. The word טעם, which is here translated "judgement," signifies bodily "taste," and that faculty in the mind which answers to it, the faculty of discerning, distinguishing, and judging rightly of, things moral and spiritual, as the palate doth of meats, their different flavours and qualities. Without this taste or discretion, we mistake falsehood for truth in our studies, and wrong for right in our practice; superstition and enthusiasm may pass with us for religion, or else licentiousness may intrude itself upon us, under the name and notion of liberty:

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in a word, our learning and knowledge prove useless, if not prejudicial, to us. A sound mind therefore should, above all things, be desired of God in our prayers; and those prayers will be heard, when we can sincerely profess a readiness to be directed by God's laws, through faith in their Author, his promises and threatenings; on which ground David urgeth his request; "for I have believed thy com-"mandments."

67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*

We collect from this verse, that prosperity is too often the parent of sin; that adversity is, first, its punishment, then, its remedy; and that every considerate man, who hath been afflicted, will thankfully acknowledge as much. "When afflictions fail to have "their due effect, the case is desperate. They are "the last remedy which indulgent Providence uses; "and if they fail, we must languish and die in "misery and contempt. Vain men! how seldom "do we know what to wish or to pray for! When we "pray against misfortunes, and when we fear them "most, we want them most. The shortest and the "best prayer which we can address to Him who "knows our wants, and our ignorance in asking, is "this—Thy will be done." Lord Bolingbroke's Reflections on Exile, p. 276.

68. *Thou* art *good, and doest good: teach me thy statutes.*

In other words, as bishop Patrick hath well connected and paraphrased it, "Thou art in thine own "nature kind and good; and nothing else can pro-

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"ceed from thee, who designest our good, even "when thou afflictest us; take what methods thou "pleasest with me, only teach me effectually to do "as thou wouldst have me."

69. *The proud have forged a lie against me:* but *I will keep thy precepts with* my *whole heart.*

Every disciple of Christ, who, like his Master, goeth contrary to the ways of the world, and condemneth them, must expect to be, like that Master, slandered and calumniated by the world. To such slanders and calumnies, a good life is the best answer. When a friend once told Plato, what scandalous stories his enemies had propagated concerning him, "I will live so," replied that great philosopher, "that "nobody shall believe them."

70. *Their heart is as fat as grease;* but *I delight in thy law.*

"The fatness of the heart" implieth, in this place, two things in those of whom it is affirmed; luxury, and its consequence, insensibility to those spiritual and divine truths, which are not only the study, but the "delight," of temperate and holy persons, who gladly fly from large companies, full tables, costly meats, and rich wines, to enjoy in private the more exalted pleasures of abstinence, meditation, and prayer.

71. It is *good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes.*

God's statutes are best learned in the school of affliction, because by affliction the great impediments to our learning them are removed; pride is subdued, and concupiscence is extinguished. "He that hath

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" suffered in the flesh," saith an apostle, " hath " ceased from sin :" 1 Pet. iv. 1. and in an immunity from sin consisteth one of the greatest felicities of heaven, which thus descends into the afflicted soul, so as to render even the state of sickness itself, in some sort, desirable. Strange as this proposition may appear, the reader will find its truth demonstrated, by the inimitable bishop Jeremy Taylor, in that truly golden tract, " The Rule and Exercises of " Holy Dying," chap. iii. sect. 6. on " The Ad- " vantages of Sickness."

72. *The law of thy mouth* is *better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

Affliction taketh from us the inclination to offend, and it giveth us, in return, a knowledge of that law which " is better," and which, when we are thoroughly acquainted with it, we shall esteem to be better, " than thousands of gold and silver ;" better in its nature, for it is from heaven, they are from the earth ; better in its use, for it bringeth salvation to our souls, whereas they can only procure sustenance for the body ; better in point of duration, for the benefits of one are certain and eternal, the advantages of the others temporal and uncertain. Blessed are they who seek in the Scriptures the true riches ; who traffic for the spiritual gains of celestial wisdom ; for surely " the merchandise of it is better than the " merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than " fine gold." Prov. iii. 14.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

JOD.—PART X.

73. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

The formation of man was the last and noblest work of God, and it is a standing miracle of divine wisdom and power. The consideration that God made us, is here urged as an argument why he should not forsake and reject us, since every artist hath a value for his own work, proportioned to its excellence. It is, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the service we owe him, founded on the relation which a creature beareth to his Creator. And the petition implieth in it a confession of our present inability to know his will without his revelation, and to do it without his grace.

74. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

They who "fear God" are naturally "glad when "they see" and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath "hoped in God's word," and hath not been disappointed. Every such instance affordeth fresh encouragement to all those who, in the course of their warfare, are to undergo like troubles, and to encounter like temptations. In all our trials, let us

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therefore remember, that our brethren, as well as ourselves, are deeply interested in the event, which may either strengthen or weaken the hands of multitudes,

75. *I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgements* are *right, and* that *thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

This humble, pious, and dutiful confession, will be made by every true child of God, when under the correction of his heavenly Father. From whatever quarter afflictions come upon us, they are "the judge-"ments of God," without whose providence nothing befalleth us. His judgements are always "right, or "just," duly proportioned to the disease and strength of the patient; in sending them, God is "faithful" and true to his word, wherein he hath never promised the crown without the cross, but hath, on the contrary, assured us, that one will be necessary, in order to our obtaining the other; and that they who are beloved by him shall not sin with impunity, nor go astray without a call to return. All this we ought to "know," or to be assured of beyond doubt, as we may be from the many declarations in Scripture, from our own experience, and from that of others.

76. *Let, I pray thee, thy mercy and kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*

In the former verse the criminal, finding that the hand of God was upon him, had owned the justice and the faithfulness of his judge in the punishment inflicted. Judgement having thus had her perfect work, the offender, now humbled and penitent, mak-

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eth application to the throne of grace, and sueth for that mercy, which God, by his "word," hath promised to his servants, who are chastened, not for their destruction, but for their salvation. When God's "judgements" have brought us to an acknowledgement of our sins, his "merciful kindness" will speedily be our "comfort."

77. *Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law* is *my delight.*

The mercies of God are "tender mercies," they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They "come unto" us when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we "live" the life of faith, of love, of joy and gladness. And to such as "delight" in his law, God will grant these mercies, and this life; he will give them pardon and by so doing, he will give them life from the dead.

78. *Let the proud be ashamed, for they dealt perversely with me without a cause;* but *I will meditate in thy precepts.*

This complaint of the Psalmist hath been made by the faithful in all ages, that the men of the world "dealt perversely with them without a cause," or oppressed them falsely, first spreading slanders and calumnies concerning them, and then persecuting them for those supposed crimes. Such usage should have no other effect upon us, than it had upon David. He prayed that "shame" and disappointment might teach humility to the "proud," and applied himself still more and more to meditate in the "precepts" of his God.

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79. *Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*

David beseecheth God, if any good men had been alienated from him, either through fear, prejudice, or offence, that they might return to him, join, and acknowledge him. To thee, O thou Son of David and King of the spiritual Israel, let those among thy people, who, through any temptation, have fallen from their allegiance, return and be subject.

80. *Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.*

This is a prayer necessary for all men to use at all times, but more particularly in seasons of persecution and temptation. By "soundness of heart" is meant solidity and steadfastness in grace and virtue, as opposed to the mere form of godliness or fair show of the hypocrite, which conceal the rottenness and corruption lurking within; and also to the sudden and vanishing goodness of the temporary convert, which quickly disappears like the morning dew, and withers like the seed sown on a rock. When internal holiness accompanies and actuates that which is external, when the word is thoroughly rooted, and faith hath acquired the sovereignty over our desires, then our "hearts" are "sound in God's statutes," and there is hope that, in the day of trial, we shall not give our brethren cause to be ashamed of us, nor be ourselves "ashamed" before God.

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CAPH.—PART XI.

81. *My soul fainteth for thy salvation:* but *I hope in thy word,* or, *I have expected thy word.*

Thus have the true servants of God, in every age, expressed their ardent desire of his salvation. Thus did the patriarchs, the prophets, the kings, and the faithful people, formerly wish to behold the advent of their Saviour in the flesh; until Simeon, taking him in his arms, spoke what they would all have spoken had they been present, "Lord, now lettest thou thy "servant depart in peace, according to thy word; "for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." But the Bridegroom was soon taken away, and the heavens have received him, until the restitution of all things; for which the church upon earth at this day waiteth and prayeth; that she may be delivered from all her troubles, and inseparably united to him in whom she delighteth. Every individual, when oppressed by sin and sorrow, may make his supplication in the same words, for that salvation which is by grace, through faith.

82. *Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*

While the promised salvation is delayed, the afflicted soul thinketh every day a year, and looketh toward heaven for the accomplishment of God's word, saying to "her Friend and her Beloved,

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"When wilt thou comfort me? Come, Lord Jesu, "come quickly *!"

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.*

"Bottles" among the Jews were made of skins. One of these, if exposed to heat and "smoke," would become shrivelled and useless. Such a change will labour and sorrow cause in the human frame; and the Psalmist here complaineth, that his beauty and his strength were gone; the natural moisture was dried up; in consequence of which, the skin shrivelled, and both colour and vigour departed from him. Disease and old age will produce the same sad effects in us all; but the body's weakness is the soul's strength; as the outward man decayeth, the inward man is renewed: "I do not forget thy statutes."

84. *How many* are *the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgement on them that persecute me?*

The well-beloved John heard a question, of the

* "Defecerunt oculi mei." Ambrosius: "Nonne quando "aliquem desideramus et speramus adfore, eò dirigimus oculos "unde speramus esse venturum? Sic teneræ uxor ætatis, de "speculâ litorali indefessâ expectatione conjugis præstolatur "adventum: ut quamcunque navim viderit, illic putat conju-"gem navigare, metuatque ne videndi gratiâ dilecti, alius an-"tevertat, nec ipsa possit prima dicere, Video te, mi marite." Vide reliqua apud Ambrosium, ejusdem planè spiritûs, nec tamen potui temperare, quin hæc exscriberem. Sic affectus est quisquis cum Paulo dissolvi cupit, et esse cum Christo. Sic denique qui semel gustato bono Dei verbo, ut idem Paulus ait, sibi postea relictus, deficit tædio sui, ac reddi sibi postulat prægustatam suavissimi amoris dulcedinem. BOSSUET.

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same import with this, asked by the spirits of the martyrs, that had left their bodies, and were waiting, in the separate state, for the day of retribution. The answer, which was made to them, may likewise satisfy our impatience, when suffering affliction and persecution: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that "were slain for the word of God, and for the testi- "mony which they held. And they cried with a "loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and "true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood "on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes "were given unto every one of them, and it was "said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little "season, until their fellow-servants also, and their "brethren, that should be killed as they were, should "be fulfilled." Rev. vi. 9, &c.

85. *The proud have digged pits for me,* which are *not after thy law.*

The manner of taking wild beasts was by "dig- "ging pits," and covering them over with turf, upon which when the beast trod, he fell into the pit, and was there confined and taken. But there was a "law," that if a pit were left open, and a tame beast, an ox, or an ass, fell into it, the owners of the pit should make good the damage: Exod. xxi. 33. Much more shall men be called to a severe account, who purposely lay snares and stumbling-blocks before the feet of their innocent brethren, to cause them to fall and perish.

86. *All thy commandments* are *faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.*

Man is perfidious and deceitful, God is "faith-

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"ful" and true; he hath promised to "help" those who suffer "wrongfully," and he will, in the end, show himself to be the avenger of all such. Let them wait with patience, since the King of Righteousness himself suffered as a malefactor, before he entered into his glory.

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.*

However low the church, or any member thereof, may, by persecution and tribulation, be brought upon earth, yet nothing can separate them from the love of God, while they "forsake not his precepts," nor disbelieve his promises. The soul, we know, must forsake the body; but God will forsake neither.

88. *Quicken me after thy loving kindness, so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*

Through the "loving kindness" of God our Saviour, the Spirit of life is given unto us, by whose "quickening" influences we are revived, when sunk in sins, or in sorrows, and are enabled with joy and gladness, to persevere in keeping the testimony of his "mouth."

LAMED.—PART XII.

89. *For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven:* or, *Thou art for ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.* 90. *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.* 91. *They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all* are *thy servants.*

The eternity of Jehovah, and the immutability of

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his counsels, are considerations which afford comfort and encouragement to his people, when their enemies are in arms against them. Even in this world the unwearied "heavens" continue to perform invariably their operations upon themselves and the bodies placed in them; while the globe of the "earth," retaining its original form and coherence of parts, still, as at the beginning, supports and maintains the successive "generations" of men, which live and move upon it, to whom the faithful promises of God are fulfilled from age to age. Thus doth the unchangeable order of nature itself point out to us the truth of her great Author, and at the same time reprove the eccentric motions of rebellious man. The heavens and the earth "continue this day according to thine "ordinance," O Lord, "for all things are thy ser-"vants;" all invariably serve thee, except man, who alone was endowed with reason that he might obey and glorify thee in this life, and that which is to come!

92. *Unless thy law* had been *my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

The Psalmist assureth us, from his own experience, how pleasant and how profitable, in time of trouble, is the meditation on the fidelity of God, as displayed in the stability of his works. The "delights," by this afforded, sustained his soul in "afflictions," which must otherwise have brought him to an end. And the same everlasting Word shall be the believer's support and consolation, even when the heavens shall melt around him with fervent heat, and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up. "Heaven

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"and earth shall pass away," saith he who made them, "but my word shall not pass away."

93. *I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Great are the necessities, and many the disorders of the soul; but in the Scripture there is provision and medicine for them all; and according to our various wants and maladies, God relieveth and "quick-"eneth" us, sometimes with one part of his word, sometimes with another. Now, when we have found ourselves thus benefited, at any time, by a particular passage of holy writ, we should "never forget," but remember and treasure it up in our minds, against a like occasion, when the same affliction and temptation may again befall us.

94. *I* am *thine; save me, for I have sought thy precepts.*

The double relation which we have the honour to bear to God by creation and by redemption, as the work of his hands, and the purchase of his blood, is a most endearing and prevailing argument with him, to "save" us from our enemies. But then let it be remembered, that no man can say to God with a good conscience, "I am thine," unless he can also go on, and say, "I have sought thy precepts," I desire to serve and obey thee alone; since, after all, "his servants we are to whom we obey;" and if sin be our master, how can we say to a master, whose interest is directly opposite, "I am thine?"

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:* but *I will consider thy testimonies.*

In the preceding verse, David besought God to

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"save" him. The reason of that prayer is here assigned, namely, because "the wicked lay in wait for "him to destroy him," as they afterwards did to destroy one, whom the afflicted and persecuted Psalmist represented. Spiritual enemies are continually upon the watch to destroy us all; and we can no way escape their wiles, but by "considering," so as to understand and observe, God's "testimonies."

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection:* but *thy commandment* is *exceeding broad.*

Of "all perfection" in this world, whether of beauty, wit, learning, pleasure, honour, or riches, experience will soon show us the "end." But where is the end or boundary of the word of God? Who can ascend to the height of its excellency; who can fathom the depth of its mysteries; who can find out the comprehension of its precepts, or conceive the extent of its promises; who can take the dimensions of that love of God to man which it describeth, or that love of man to God which it teacheth! The knowledge of one thing leadeth us forward to that of another, and still, as we travel on, the prospect opens before us into eternity, like the pleasant and fruitful mountains of Canaan, rising on the other side of Jordan, when viewed by Moses from the top of Pisgah. O happy reign of celestial wisdom, permanent felicity, true riches, and unfading glory; while we contemplate thee, how doth the world lessen, and shrink to nothing in our eyes! Thy blessings faith now beholdeth, but it is charity which shall hereafter possess and enjoy them.

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MEM.—PART XIII.

97. *O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Words cannot express the love which a pious mind entertaineth for the Scriptures. They are the epistle of God to mankind, offering reconciliation, peace, and union with himself in glory; containing reasons why we should love him and each other, with directions how to show forth that love, which, as the apostle saith, is "the fulfilling of the law:" Rom. xiii. 10. On some portions of these Scriptures should our "meditation" be continually, and "each "day" should add something to our knowledge, to our faith, to our virtue.

98. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they* are *ever with me.* 99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies* are *my meditation.* 100. *I understand more than the ancients: because I keep thy precepts.*

The "commandments" of God were "ever with" David; the "testimonies" of God were his "me-"ditation;" and the "precepts" of God it was his care to "observe;" therefore his wisdom exceeded the policy of his "enemies," the learning of his "teachers," and the experience of the "ancients." Thus, by the wisdom of the Scriptures, did the holy Jesus, in the days of his flesh, confound his adversaries, astonish the teachers of the law, and instruct the aged. And it is the high prerogative of the

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Scriptures, at all times, to render youth and simplicity superior to the inveterate malice and subtilty of the grand deceiver and his associates.

101. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*

The foundation of all religion must be laid in mortification and self-denial; for since the will of fallen men is contrary to the will of God, we must abstain from doing the one in order to do the other. The affections may be styled the "feet" of the soul, and unless these be "refrained from evil ways," no progress can be made in that way which alone is good and right; we cannot "keep God's word."

102. *I have not departed from thy judgements; for thou hast taught me.*

Perseverance is the effect of instruction from above, by the Spirit, through the word: and our heavenly Teacher differeth from all others in this, that, with the lesson, he bestoweth on the scholar both a disposition to learn, and an ability to perform.

103. *How sweet are thy words unto my taste!* yea, sweeter *than honey to my mouth.*

The soul hath its "taste," as well as the body, and that taste is then in good order, when the "words of Scripture are "sweet" to the soul, as "honey" is to the mouth. If they are not always so, it is because our taste is vitiated by the world and the flesh; and we shall ever find our relish for the word of God to be greatest, when that for the world and the flesh is least, in time of affliction, sickness, and death; for these are contrary, one to the

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other. In heaven the latter will be no more, and therefore the former will be all in all.

104. *Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

He who delighteth to study the Scriptures, will, "understand," from them, the true nature of righteousness and of sin; he who doth understand the nature of each, will love the former; and, in proportion, "hate" the latter: and with that which we thoroughly hate, we will not bear to have any connexion; with suspicion and jealousy we shall eye it approaching; with courage and constancy we shall arm and fight against it; we shall make no peace, nor so much as a truce with it; but, as faithful soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ, we shall aim at that utter extermination of it, which we have vowed, and which, through the Spirit of grace and power, will be accomplished, but not, perhaps, totally, till our life and warfare shall end together.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

NUN.—PART XIV.

105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Man is a traveller, his life is a journey, heaven is his end, his road lies through a wilderness, and he is in the dark. Thus circumstanced, how earnestly and devoutly ought he to pray, "O send out thy "light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them

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"bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles!" Psalm. xxiii. 3. For surely "the commandment is a "lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruc- "tion are the way of life:" Prov. vi. 23. The word of God discovereth to us our errors; it showeth us where we lost our way, and how we may recover it again. If we take this "lamp" in our hand, it will not only point out our course in general, but also direct us in every step, and guide our "feet" aright in the "path" of holiness and peace. Thus, through the devious and lonely wilds of Arabia, was Israel once conducted to the land of promise, by the illuminating pillar, or rather by Him whose presence dwelt in the midst of it.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform* it, *that I will keep thy righteous judgements.*

Such being the direction afforded by the word of God to a benighted pilgrim, David had obliged himself, in the most solemn manner, to follow that direction. Every Christian doth, at his baptism, in like manner, "promise and vow to keep God's com- "mandments, and to walk in the same all the days "of his life." The nature and extent of these engagements must be interpreted according to the covenant of grace, under which they are made. The command to us sinners is, that we should repent, and believe in him, who will pardon our failings, and strengthen our infirmities, that we may walk as becometh his disciples, who, though they ought not to commit sin, may yet, by divine grace, be restored and saved from it. "These things write I unto you, "that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an

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"advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righ-
"teous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."
1 John ii. 1.

107. *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O* LORD, *according to thy word.*

The faithful servants of God may be "afflicted;" they may be "very much" and grievously afflicted: but let them consider, that by afflictions, their corruptions are purged away, their faith is tried, their patience perfected, their brethren are edified, and their Master is glorified. Let them still firmly rely on the divine promise of grace and salvation; still humbly pray for its accomplishment in themselves: "Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy word."

108. *Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O* LORD; *and teach me thy judgements.*

The "offerings" of the believer are prayer, praise, and holy resolutions and vows, like that of the Psalmist above, "to keep God's righteous judgements," in which he therefore petitioneth to be every day more and more "taught" and instructed by the Spirit of truth. Christians are called by St. Peter "a royal and holy priesthood, appointed to offer up "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus "Christ." 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9.

109. *My soul* is *continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.*

To have one's "soul," נַפְשִׁי, or life, "in one's "hand," is a phrase often used in Scripture, and implieth going in continual danger of one's life: see Judg. xii. 3. 1 Sam. xix. 5. and xxviii. 21. Job xiii. 14. Great and incessant as David's perils were,

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he did not "forget" God's promises, nor his precepts, but trusted in the former, and performed the latter. St. Paul knew, that "in every city bonds and afflic-"tions awaited him: but none of these things," saith he, "move me, neither count I my life dear "unto myself, so that I might finish my course with "joy." Acts xx. 23.

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.*

When open violence fails to move a man from his steadfastness, "the wicked will lay snares" for him, to entice him into sin, by the baits of honour, pleasure, or profit; by exposing him to unavoidable temptations, as, when David was driven out of his own land, to live among idolaters, of which usage he complaineth, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19; or else, by making laws which an honest man cannot obey without sin, or refuse to obey without danger. Numberless are the traps of one kind or other, which human wit and diabolical malice, in conjunction, have set for the consciences of those who profess themselves to be the servants of God; and happy is that servant, whom they have not caused to "err from the pre-"cepts" of his Master.

111. *Thy testimonies have I taken as mine heritage for ever: for they* are *the rejoicing of my heart.*

The "testimonies" of God's will, his word and his sacraments, are the bonds and the deeds by which we hold our heavenly "inheritance, as heirs of God "and joint heirs with Christ." Of these deeds, and this inheritance, no power can deprive us; and when "they are the rejoicing of our hearts," we shall

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not, by preferring an earthly inheritance, deprive ourselves of them.

112. *I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always,* even unto *the end.*

The "inclination of the heart" to good, is the work of God; but man is, nevertheless, in this as in other instances, said to perform it, when he listens to the call, and obeys the motions, of his grace. We are not to judge of ourselves by what we sometimes say and do, but by the general disposition and tendency of the heart and its affections. When, after repeated trials, we find that the love of God casts the scale against the love of the world; when it is our glory, our delight, our treasure, our meat and drink, to do his will, and, against all opposition, to persevere in doing it, "even unto the end;" then are we the true disciples of that Master, whose heart was evermore inclined to good; who alone performed a perfect and spotless obedience, and persisted in working the work of him that sent him, until, with his last breath, he declared, upon the cross, IT IS FINISHED.

SAMECH.—PART XV.

113. *I hate* vain *thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

"Love and hatred" are the two great and influencing affections of the human mind. Since the fall, they have been misplaced. By nature we "love "vain thoughts," and "hate the law of God. The "carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not

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"subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" Rom. viii. 7. But in a renewed mind the case is altered; its delight is in the law of God, and therefore it cannot bear "vain thoughts," which are contrary to that law, and exalt themselves against it. Thoughts are often said to be free; from human censure they are, but not from the cognisance and judgement of the Omniscient. The mind should be well furnished with proper materials, on which to employ itself. We shall then be secured against the incursions of rambling, conceited, worldly, impure, and revengeful thoughts, which otherwise will devour half our time, and appear against us, to our unspeakable amazement, in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

114. *Thou art my hiding-place, and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

From vain thoughts, and vain persons, the Psalmist teacheth us to fly, by prayer, to God, as our refuge and protector. This course a believer will as naturally take, in the hour of temptation and danger, as the offspring of the hen, on perceiving a bird of prey hovering over their heads, retire to their "hiding place," under the wings of their dam; or as the warrior opposeth his "shield" to the darts which are aimed at him.

115. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

Safe under the protection of the Almighty, David bids the wicked "depart from him;" he neither fears their malice, nor will follow their counsels, being resolutely determined to adhere to his duty, and

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to "keep the commandments of his God." He who hath formed David's resolution, must, like him, disclaim and renounce the society of "evil-doers;" for every man will insensibly contract the good or bad qualities of the company which he keeps; and should, therefore, be careful to keep such as will make him wiser and better, and fit him for the goodly fellowship of saints and angels.

116. *Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.*
117. *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*

A resolution to fly from evil, and to do good, is properly followed by an earnest and repeated prayer, to be "upheld" in the performance of it, by divine grace, "according to God's word" and promise; that so our "hope" in that word may not fail, and put us to "shame" before our enemies; that we may be "saved" from falling, and enabled, in our walking, to have "respect unto the divine statutes continually." How necessary is this prayer to be made by creatures, whose tempers and dispositions are ever varying; who have so many and so formidable adversaries to contend with, and on whom their temporal condition hath so much influence!

118. *Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.*

The dreadful judgements which God, from time to time, in all ages of the world, hath executed, and which he still can and will execute, upon impenitent sinners, afford a kind of admonition, and a powerful motive, to obedience. As no force can counteract

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the power of God, so no "cunning" can deceive his wisdom, but will always, in the end, miserably "deceive" those who trust in it, and employ it against the counsels of heaven; "their deceit, or "subtility, is falsehood," שקר, it will fail, and ruin its owners. Of this, history furnisheth instances in abundance. And it will be evident to all the world, when simplicity and innocence shall reign triumphant with the Lamb, on mount Sion; and deceit and guile shall have their portion with the serpent, in the lake of fire.

119. *Thou puttest away all the ungodly of the earth* like *dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.*

"Ungodly" men and hypocrites are mingled among the sons and servants of God, as "dross" is blended with the pure metal, and appeareth to be part of it. But the fiery trial of divine judgement soon discovereth the difference. The false pretences of the hypocrite are detected, and the glory of the wicked vanisheth away. These dispensations of God's providence increase our "love" of his "word;" because they give us sensible experience of its truth, they show us the justice of God in punishing others, together with his mercy in sparing us, and removing those who might have corrupted us and turned the silver itself into dross. In times of visitation, Christ sitteth among his people "as a refiner and purifier "of silver," purging away all dross, that out of what remains may be made "vessels of honour, meet for "the Master's use" to serve and to adorn the sanctuary. See Mal. iii. 3. Isa. i. 25. 2 Tim. ii. 21.

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120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgements.*

At the presence of Jehovah, when he appeareth in judgement, the earth trembleth and is still. His best servants are not exempted from an awful dread upon such occasions; scenes of this kind, shown in vision to the prophets, caused their flesh to quiver, and all their bones to shake. Encompassed with a frail body, and a sinful world, we stand in need of every possible tie; and the affections both of fear and love must be employed, to restrain us from transgression; we must, at the same time, "love "God's testimonies, and fear his judgements."

AIN.—PART XVI.

121. *I have done judgement and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.*

He who is engaged in a righteous cause, and hath acted uprightly in the support of it, may, so far, without incurring the censure of boasting, or trusting to his own righteousness, make David's plea, "I have done judgement and justice;" as if he had said, Thou, O my God, knowest that I am innocent of the crimes whereof my implacable enemies accuse me, and that I have done no wrong to those who seek to take away my life; deliver not thine injured servant, therefore, into their hands; "leave me not "to mine oppressors." The Son of David might use the words in their full and absolute sense, and plead for a glorious resurrection, on the foot of his having performed a perfect obedience to the law.

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122. *Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.*

The Psalmist finding himself ready to be seized by his insolent adversaries, like a helpless and insolvent debtor, entreateth the Almighty to appear in his defence, to take the matter into his own hands, to interpose and plead his cause, as his surety and advocate, in the day of trouble. Good Hezekiah uses the same word in the same sense, speaking of the time when death was about to make his claim upon the mortal part of him; "O Lord, I am oppressed, ערבני, undertake, be surety for me:" Isa. xxxviii. 14. Happy the creatures, whose Creator is their surety, and hath interposed to rescue them from those great oppressors, sin, death, and Satan!

123. *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.*

Salvation, whether temporal or spiritual, may be delayed; the "eyes" of the sufferer may "fail with looking upward, and his earnest expectation may be ready to break forth, in the words of Sisera's mother, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" But what saith God, by his prophets and apostles? "Though it tarry, "wait for it, because it will surely come:" Hab. ii. 3. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come, "will come:" Heb. x. 37. The "word" which hath promised it, is the word of truth, faithfulness, and "righteousness;" the attributes of God are engaged for its accomplishment, and he cannot deny himself.

124. *Deal with thy servant according unto thy*

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mercy, and teach me thy statutes. 125. *I am thy servant: give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*

The consideration, that we are the "servants" of God, if indeed we are so, will always be successfully urged to the best of masters, as an argument why he should "deal with us according to his mercy," in the pardoning of our offences; "teach us his statutes," that we may know and do his will; and instruct us in his "testimonies," that we may believe aright concerning him.

126. It is *time for* thee, LORD, *to work: for they have made void thy law.*

The "law" of God "is made void" by those who deny its authority, or its obligation; by those who render it of none effect through their traditions, or their lives. When a deluge of wickedness and impiety entering at these gates, hath overwhelmed a land, "it is time for the Lord to work;" the great lawgiver will then exert his power, and vindicate his authority speedily. There is a certain measure of iniquity, which when communities, or individuals respectively, have filled up, the destroying angel comes forth, and executes his commission. How ought a man to fear, lest the next sin he commits should fill up his measure, and seal his eternal doom!

127. *Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*

As the wickedness of those increaseth who "make void the divine law," the zeal and "love" of believers should increase in proportion, to stem the torrent; and this may be done to a surprising degree,

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by a few persons, who, after the example of the first Christians, can forsake all, to follow their Master; who have the sense and the courage to prefer truth, wisdom, holiness, and heaven, to falsehood, folly, sin, and the world; who can resolutely reject the glittering temptation, and say, without hypocrisy, to their God, "I love thy commandments above gold; "yea, above fine gold."

128. *Therefore I esteem all* thy *precepts* concerning *all* things to be *right;* or, *Therefore all thy precepts, even all, have I approved;* and *I hate every false way.*

For the same reason that the children of God, in the worst of times, "love his commandments," they love them "all," not observing such only as they can observe without giving offence, but, regardless of the censures of the world, doing their duty in every particular; not "hating" some "evil ways," and at the same time walking in others, but extending and manifesting their aversion to all alike. Of such persons it is evident, that they make a conscience of their doings, and their conduct appears to be uniform; the adversary will have no evil thing to say of them; they will do real service to the cause which they maintain; and, after having honoured their Master before men, they will by him be honoured before men and angels.

PE.—PART XVII.

129. *Thy testimonies* are *wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep,* or, *observe, them.*

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The Scriptures are "wonderful," with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce. They contain the sublimest spiritual truths, veiled under external ceremonies and sacraments, figurative descriptions, typical histories, parables, similitudes, &c. When properly opened and enforced, they terrify and humble, they convert and transform, they console and strengthen. Who but must delight to study and to "observe" these "testimonies" of the will and the wisdom, the love and the power, of God most high! While we have these holy writings, let us not waste our time, misemploy our thoughts, and prostitute our admiration, by doating on human follies, and wondering at human trifles.

130. *The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.*

The Scriptures are the appointed means of "enlightening" the mind with true and saving knowledge. They show us what we were, what we are, and what we shall be; they show us what God hath done for us, and what he expecteth us to do for him; they show us the adversaries we have to encounter, and how to encounter them with success; they show us the mercy and the justice of the Lord, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell. Thus will they "give to the simple," in a few days, an "understanding" of those matters, which philosophy, for whole centuries, sought in vain.

131. *I opened my mouth and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.*

An eastern traveller, fatigued through toil, and

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parched by heat, doth not, with more vehement desire, gasp for the cooling breeze, than the servant of God, in time of temptation and trouble, "panteth" after that spirit of refreshment and consolation, which breathes in the Scriptures of truth. The affections are the springs of human actions; no arguments are needful to impel, and no difficulties are sufficient to retard, the man who is in pursuit of an object which, with all his heart, he loves and "longs for." How happy is it when heaven, instead of earth, is that object.

132. *Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.*

A child of God is never so much afflicted, as when his heavenly Father seemeth, for a time, to have turned away his face from him. All lesser troubles vanish, when God deth but vouchsafe a "look" of paternal compassion. And since the love of Jehovah to his people is unchangeable as his nature, mercies formerly shown to others are most forcibly urged by the Psalmist in his petition for the like; "Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those "that love thy name."

133. *Order my steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*

By the instruction of his "word," God bringeth us into the way of life; by the aids of his grace he "directeth" and "supporteth" our "steps" in that way, enabling us, as we proceed, to overcome the sins which do beset us, so that they prevail not to turn us back, or to make us desist from travelling toward the city of our eternal habitation.

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134. *Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.*

He truly loveth God, who requesteth "deliver-"ance" from "oppression" and persecution, that he may again enjoy the opportunities of "keeping "his precepts," and of serving him without distraction. And gratitude for his deliverance will be, with such an one, an additional reason for using those opportunities, when they are restored, to the best advantage.

135. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and teach me thy statutes.*

The same sentiment is again expressed in different language. The Psalmist prayeth for a return of the divine favour, and for better days, that in peace and tranquillity he may learn and do the will of God. Tribulation is a dark and tempestuous night; but Jehovah causeth "his face to shine" upon his people, and the effects are like those produced by the sun at his rising, when universal nature revives and rejoices, and clouds and darkness fly away.

136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*

David, who, through this whole Psalm, so often and so ardently beseecheth God "to teach him his "statutes," declareth in this verse his continual grief of heart, occasioned by seeing others break those statutes. Thus Lot, among the Sodomites, was "vexed "from day to day," not so much at their usage of himself, as at "seeing and hearing their unlawful "deeds:" 2 Pet. ii. 8. Thus Jeremiah telleth the ungodly of his time, "If ye will not hear, my soul

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"shall weep in secret places for your pride; and "mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with "tears:" Jer. xiii. 17. Thus the holy Jesus "look-"ed round about on the Pharisees, being grieved "for the hardness of their hearts," Mark iii. 5.; and "wept over" a city which had always persecuted, and was then about to crucify him, because it "knew not the things which belonged to its peace:" Luke xix. 41. Accept, O Lord, the tears which our blessed Redeemer shed, in the days of his flesh, for us, who should, but alas! too often cannot, weep for our brethren, or for ourselves; and give us, at least, the grace of holy mourning, which in thy sight is of great price.

TZADDI.—PART XVIII.

137. *Righteous* art *thou, O* LORD, *and upright* are *thy judgements.*

This portion of our Psalm is employed in celebrating the righteousness of God, manifested to us by his word, and by his dispensations, which that word both recordeth and explaineth. It is said of the emperor Mauritius, that, upon seeing all his children slain before his face, at the command of that bloody tyrant and usurper, Phocas, himself expecting the next stroke, with a pholosophy truly divine, he exclaimed aloud, in these words of David, "Righteous art "thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgements*." By faith he was assured of this great truth, and nobly confessed it, notwithstanding all appearances to the

* Baron. Annal. ad Ann. 602.

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contrary. The last day will demonstrate the same thing to the whole world, and open the mouths of men and angels to declare, concerning all the divine proceedings, what the good Mauritius acknowledged, at the time, with regard to the murder of his children.

138. *Thy testimonies,* that *thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.*

The revelations of God's will are "righteousness" and "truth;" his commands are just, and ought to be obeyed; his promises and his threatenings will infallibly come to pass, and deserve, above all things, to be regarded.

139. *My zeal hath consumed me; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.*

"Zeal" is a high degree of love; and when the object of that love is ill treated, it venteth itself in a mixture of grief and indignation, which are sufficient to wear and "consume" the heart. This will be the case, where men rightly conceive of that dishonour which is continually done to God by creatures whom he hath made and redeemed. But never could the verse be uttered, with such fulness of truth and propriety, by any one, as by the Son of God, who had such a sense of the Father's glory, and of man's sin, as no person else ever had. And, accordingly, when his zeal had exerted itself in purging the temple, St. John tells us, "his disciples remembered that it "was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me "up." The place where it is so written, is Psalm lxix. 9. and the passage is exactly parallel to this before us.

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140. *Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it.*

"Thy word is very pure," in the original, "tried, "refined, purified, like gold in the furnace;" absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them *. This pure word hath likewise in it a power of purifying us. It containeth precepts and examples of purity, helps and encouragements to purity, and the Spirit of purity goeth with it, and worketh by it. "Therefore thy servant loveth it;" and no one, but a true servant of God, can "therefore" love it, because it is pure; since he who loves it must desire to be like it, to feel its efficacy, to be reformed by it, and conformed to it.

141. *I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.*

Faithfulness to God will often reduce men to straits, and bring upon them the contempt of the world; happy are they who, under these difficulties and discouragements, "forget not his precepts," but still continue faithful, looking unto Jesus, who once "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now "set down at the right hand of God," Heb. xii. 2.

142. *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.*

Men may decree wickedness by a law, or they may

* Pure gold is so fixed, that Boerhaave informs us of an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass-furnace for two months, without losing a single grain.

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change their decrees, and, with them, what was right to-day, may be wrong to-morrow. But the law of God is "righteousness," and it is "truth," to-day, and for ever. His justice, goodness, and fidelity, are unchangeable; he will never forsake us, unless we forsake him, but will remember us in our lowest estate, if, in that estate, we "do not forget his pre-"cepts."

143. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold upon*, or, *have found me*, yet *thy commandments are my delights.*

We need not take pains, as many do, "to find "trouble and anguish," for they will one day "find "us." In that day, the revelations of God must be to us instead of all worldly "delights" and pleasures, which will then have forsaken us; and how forlorn and desolate will be our state, if we shall have no other delights, no other pleasures, to succeed them, and to accompany us into eternity! Let our study be now in the Scriptures, if we expect our comfort from them in time to come.

144. *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.*

In every sense, O Lord Jesu, thy righteousness is "everlasting:" Grant us the "understanding" of it, in every sense, and we "shall live," in thee now, and with thee for ever.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

KOPH.—PART XIX.

145. *I cried with* my *whole heart; hear me, O* LORD: *I will keep thy statutes.* 146. *I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*

Believers, in time of affliction, make their prayer to God with fervour and importunity, petitioning for deliverance, that they may the better serve their Deliverer, and keep his laws.

157. *I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.* 148. *Mine eyes prevent the* night *watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*

It is a certain sign that our hearts are set upon a work, when the thoughts of it cause sleep to depart from us, and we awake readily, constantly, and early, to the performance of it. David delighted in the holy exercises of prayer and meditation; therefore he "prevented the dawning of the morning," and was beforehand with the light itself; therefore his "eyes "prevented the watches," that is, the last of those watches, into which the night was by the Jews divided; he needed not the watchman's call, but was stirring before it could be given. Climate and constitution will, doubtless, make a difference, and claim considerable allowance; but by Christians, who enjoy their health, in temperate weather, the sun should not be suffered to shine in vain, nor the golden hours of the morning to glide away unimproved; since of

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David's Lord, as well as of David, it is said, "in "the morning rising up, a great while before day, "he went out and departed into a solitary place, and "there prayed." Mark i. 35.

149. *Hear my voice, according unto thy loving kindness: O* LORD, *quicken me according to thy judgement,* that is, *thy word.* 150. *They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.* 151. *Thou* art *near, O* LORD; *and all thy commandments* are *truth.*

If our enemies "draw nigh" to destroy us, God is still "nearer" to preserve us; and, however his "word" may be rejected by the wicked, the faithful always find it to be "true," to their great and endless comfort.

152. *Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old, that thou hast founded them for ever.*

This portion of our Psalm endeth with the triumph of faith over all dangers and temptations. "Con- "cerning thy testimonies," the revelations of thy will, thy counsels for the salvation of thy servants, "I have known of old," by faith, and by my own experience, as well as that of others, "that thou hast "founded them for ever;" they are unalterable and everlasting as the attributes of their great Author, and can never fail those who rely upon them, in time, or in eternity.

RESH.—PART XX.

153. *Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.*

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It is happy when our "afflictions" do not make us to "forget the law of God;" then have we confidence toward him in our prayers, that he will "consider" and regard our sufferings, as he did those of Israel in Egypt, and come down to "deliver" us out of all our troubles; for Israel is still in Egypt, while the church is in the world; but let us remember the promise, and rejoice in hope.

154. *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*

God is the Patron of his people, to "plead" their "cause;" their Redeemer, to "deliver" them out of troubles; the Author and Fountain of their life, to "quicken" and support them. We may, therefore, have recourse to him at all times, as an Advocate, a Saviour, and a Comforter, for the defence of our cause, the deliverance of our persons, and the support of our hearts. And all this, "according to "his word," in which he hath engaged thus to patronize, to rescue, and to strengthen, those who trust in him, and apply to him.

155. *Salvation* is *far from the wicked; for they seek not thy statutes.*

The "salvation" which is nigh to the faithful, because they diligently and earnestly seek to know and to do the will of God revealed to them in his word, is "far from the wicked," because "they seek not his "statutes," nor concern themselves to know what they are, much less to observe and practise them.

156. *Great* are *thy tender mercies, O* LORD: *quicken me according to thy judgements*, that is, *thy word*. 157. *Many* are *my persecutors, and*

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mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. 158. *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*

Persecution tempteth men to apostasy, and is the great trial of our fidelity to God and to his word. He who, in such circumstances, forgetteth his own sufferings, to commiserate the sin and folly of his persecutors, is a true follower, as David was a forerunner of Jesus Christ.

159. *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O* LORD, *according to thy loving kindness.* 160. *Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgements* endureth *for ever.*

It is observable how the Psalmist delighteth to dwell on these two sweet notes; the "loving kind-"ness" of God in promising salvation, and his "truth" in the constant performance of that promise to his church, while she "loves" and adheres to his "precepts." Thus it hath been "from the begin-"ning," and thus it will be, until the whole counsel of heaven shall at length be fulfilled, by the resurrection and salvation of the just.

SCHIN.—PART XXI.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.* 162. *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

David was "persecuted," by Saul and his associates, "without a cause." The life of Saul was spared by him, because "he stood in awe of God's

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"word," and preferred the comfortable reflection of having obeyed its injunctions, to all the "spoil," and to those many advantages, that would have accrued to him, by the overthrow and death of his implacable adversary, who acknowledged, upon the occasion, "Thou art more righteous than I:" 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. The sufferings of the body are soon over; the joys of conscience have no end.

163. *I hate and abhor lying:* but *thy law do I love.*

The word of truth is the proper object of our "love," and every thing which is contrary to it deserveth our "hatred and abhorrence;" nor is life itself worth preserving, at the expense either of our faith or our virtue.

164. *Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgements.*

They who, like David, during the time of persecution and affliction, put their trust in God, and wait his decision of their cause, will always find reason, as David did, to "praise him seven times a day," or continually, for his just decrees and "righteous "judgments" concerning them.

165. *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those who not only do the will of God, but "love" to do it. They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men,

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by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is so at peace with them, that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this "great peace," no "offences" or stumbling-blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution or temptation, by the malice of enemies or the apostasy of friends, by any thing which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God's commandments.

166. LORD, *I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.*

This is the true posture of a Christian, in which he need not fear to be found by his last and great enemy, death, "doing" his duty, and "hoping" for salvation from the person who is his Maker, as well as his Redeemer, and who, consequently, expecteth to be obeyed, no less than to be believed in.

167. *My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* 168. *I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways* are *before thee.*

The "love of God's testimonies," and the consideration, that all "our ways are before him," and subject to his immediate inspection, are two powerful motives to obedience. The plea of having "kept the divine precepts," &c. in the mouth of David, or any other believer, intendeth sincerity, not perfection, and is alleged as an evidence of grace, not as a claim of merit. Christ alone kept the old law, and he enableth us to observe the new.

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TAU.—PART XXII.

169. *Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD: *give me understanding according to thy word.* 170. *Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.*

The Psalmist still continueth instant in prayer for "understanding," to direct him in the midst of dangers and temptations, and for "deliverance" out of them all, when God shall see fit to accomplish the promises made in his "word." These are blessings, for which a man cannot be too frequent, or too earnest, in his petitions to the throne of heaven.

171. *My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.* 172. *My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments* are *righteousness.*

He who obtaineth his requests, and is made a partaker of that grace and salvation for which he so fervently prayed, will edify men, by singing the "praises," and proclaiming the "righteousness" of God his Saviour.

173. *Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts.* 174. *I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD: *and thy law* is *my delight.*

"Salvation" by the "hand," or arm of Jehovah (which is often in Scripture a title of Messiah), hath been the object of the hopes, the desires, and "longing" expectation of the faithful, from Adam to this hour; and will continue so to be, until He, who hath already visited us in great humility,

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shall come again in glorious majesty, to complete our redemption, and take us to himself.

175. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgements help me.*

The "life" which God granteth and preserveth to us, whether it be the natural life of the body, or the spiritual life of the soul (for both are from him), should be employed in "praising" him. This return for his mercies we are always ready to promise, when we are in danger, but often forgetful to perform, when delivered out of it.

176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*

It is doubtful, whether David here speaks of his misery, or his sin; of his "wandering," as an exile in foreign lands, or of his "going astray" from the "commandments" of his God, though he had not altogether "forgotten," but was desirous of returning again to the observance of them, and therefore beseeches the great Shepherd to "seek" and bring back his "lost sheep *." In the application of the

* "Erravi sicut ovis—Omnes nos quasi oves erravimus." Isa. liii. 6. Sed nos bonus ille Pastor humeris reportavit." Luc. xv. 5. Bossuet. Mr. Merrick's Poetical Paraphrase of this verse is so beautiful and affecting, that I cannot refrain from subjoining it—

Thine eyes in me the sheep behold,
Whose feet have wander'd from the fold;
That, guideless, helpless, strives in vain
To find its safe retreat again;
Now listens, if perchance its ear
The Shepherd's well-known voice may hear;

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passage to ourselves, it matters not which interpretation we adopt, since we are both sinners and exiles; exiles, because sinners; "we have erred and strayed "from God's ways, like lost sheep," and are, for that reason, excluded from our heavenly city and country, to wander for a time in the wilderness. Restore us, O Lord Jesu, by thy grace to righteousness, and by thy power to glory!

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXX.

ARGUMENT.

This, and the fourteen Psalms which follow it, are entitled, "Psalms of Degrees, or of Ascensions." For what reason they were so called, is altogether uncertain. Certain, however, it is, that they are most instructive and pleasing compositions, wonderfully calculated to elevate the soul to God; and that the Christian, as he proceeds from one degree of virtue to another, in his way towards eternal felicity, cannot employ himself better than in meditation on them. In the first of these

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Now, as the tempests round it blow,
In plaintive accents vents its woe.
Great Ruler of this earthly ball,
Do thou my erring steps recall:
O seek thou him who thee has sought,
Nor turns from thy decrees his thought.

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Psalms, the Author, most probably David, complaineth of the falsehood, the treachery, and the violence of men, amongst whom he grieveth that his pilgrimage is prolonged.

1. *In my distress, I cried unto the* LORD, *and he heard me.* 2. *Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips,* and *from a deceitful tongue.*

The Prophet relateth the success of his prayer made to Jehovah in time of trouble. He "cried," and was "heard." The particular species of trouble, under which he then laboured, was that caused by the malice and treachery of his adversaries, who either with "lying lips" bore false witness against him, or with a "deceitful tongue" tried to ensnare him, and to draw something from him, on which they might ground an accusation. Thus the Jews dealt with Christ; and men of their cast and complexion have, in all ages, dealt thus with his true followers. From such "lips," and such "tongues," God only can "deliver" the persons and the reputations of the most innocent.

3. *What shall be given unto thee! or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?* 4. *Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.*

Some render the first of these two verses a little differently: "What shall a false tongue give thee, "or what shall it add to thee?" The sense will be much the same, whether the Psalmist be supposed to address his question to the false tongue, or to him who is the owner of it. The purport of the question plainly is this: What profit or advantage do you ex-

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peet to reap from this practice of lying and slandering? what will at last be its end and its reward? Then followeth the answer: "Sharp arrows of the "mighty one," גִּבּוֹר, who is the avenger of truth and innocence; with a fire that burns fiercely, and burns long, like that which was made of "juniper," or some wood used in those days, remarkable for increasing and retaining heat; punishments justly inflicted on a tongue, the words of which have been keen and killing as arrows, and which, by its lies and calumnies, hath contributed to set the world on fire. We read in the Gospel, of one who exclaimed, "Send "Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in "water, and cool my TONGUE; for I am tormented "in this FLAME."

5. *Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!*

The Psalmist lamenteth his long continuance among those deceitful and malicious men, whom he compareth to the wild, barbarous, and idolatrous Arabs, the descendants of "Kedar," the son of Ishmael: Gen. xxv. 13. The former part of the verse is, with greater propriety perhaps, rendered by many of the translators and expositors, thus: "Woe is me "that my sojourning is prolonged—" כִּי גָרִתִי מֶשֶׁךְ, "I dwell, or, my dwelling is, among the tents of "Kedar." When our Lord was upon earth, the Jews were become the spiritual Ishmaelites, sons of the bond-woman, persecutors of the sons of the free-woman, and the children of promise. "O faithless "and perverse generation," saith he, "how long "shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"

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Matt. xvii. 17. "And as then he that was born "after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after "the Spirit, even so it is now:" Gal. iv. 29. The church daily sigheth and groaneth, because her "sojourning is prolonged," and she dwelleth among adversaries of various denominations, among those who take delight in vexing and troubling her. These are "the tents of Kedar," among which we dwell in the wilderness, longing to depart, and to be with Christ in the city of the living God.

6. *My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.* 7. *I* am *for peace; or, I am a man of peace: but when I speak, they* are *for war.*

If this was the case of David, much more might the Son of David make the same complaint, that he "dwelt with them that hated peace;" that although he was "a man of peace," meek, lowly, and gracious in his deportment to all around him; although he came to make peace, and to reconcile all things in heaven and earth; although his conversation and his preaching were of peace, and love, and the kingdom of God; yet no sooner did he open his mouth to "speak upon these divine subjects, but his enemies were up in arms, ready to apprehend, to accuse, to condemn, and to crucify him. Marvel not, O disciple of Jesus! if the world hate and oppose thee; but pray only, that when thou shalt be used as he was, thou mayest be enabled to bear that usage as he did.

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PSALM CXXI.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the Prophet, 1, 2. introduceth a person, most probably an Israelite on his way to Jerusalem, expressing his trust and confidence in Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, of whose favour and protection, at all times, and in all dangers, the Prophet, 3—8. assureth him. These promises, like those in the xcist Psalm, were, in their full and spiritual sense, made good to Messiah, and are now daily accomplishing in the members of his mystical body, the Christian church. Bishop Lowth supposeth the two first verses to be spoken by David, when going out to war, and the answer of encouragement to be made by the high priest from the Holy Place. In this case, the idea of warfare is added to that of pilgrimage, and the Psalm rendered still more applicable to us, as well as to the true David our King.

1. *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help.* 2. *My help* cometh *from the* LORD, *which made heaven and earth.*

The truly Israelite, amidst the dangers of his earthly pilgrimage and warfare, looketh continually towards the heavenly city, whither he is travelling. Faith showeth him afar off the everlasting "hills, "from whence cometh the help," which must bring

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him in safety to them. He "lifteth up his eyes" in prayer to the Almighty, whose temple and habitation are thereon. He putteth not his trust in any creature, but imploreth aid immediately of "him who "made heaven and earth," and who, consequently, hath power over all things in both.

3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.* 4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

In the first two verses, we heard the believer declaring his resolution to trust in God. The Prophet now commendeth that resolution, and encourageth him to persevere in it. As if he had said, Thou dost well to expect help from Jehovah alone; to overlook the vanities here below; to place thy confidence, and set thy affections, on him who dwelleth above. Know therefore assuredly, that he will be with thee in the way in which thou goest; he will preserve thee from falling, and defend thee from all dangers; for in him thou hast a guardian, who is not, like all others, liable to remit his care, by being subject to sleep or death. The eye of his providence is upon thee, and that is always open. "Behold, he that "keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

5. *The* LORD is *thy keeper: the* LORD is *thy shade upon thy right hand.* 6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

The meaning is, that the good man, during his journey through life, shall be under God's protection at all seasons; as Israel in the wilderness was defended from the burning heat of the sun, by the moist and refreshing shadow of the cloud; and secured

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against the inclement influences of the nocturnal heavens, by the kindly warmth and splendour diffused from the pillar of fire. Be thou with us, thy servants, O Lord, in the world, as thou wast with Israel in the wilderness; suffer not our virtue to dissolve before the sultry gleams of prosperity; permit it not to be frozen by the chilling blast of adversity.

7. *The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.* 8. *The* LORD *shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.*

To dissipate our fears, and remove every ground of diffidence, Jehovah promiseth, by his holy Prophet, to "preserve us from all evil," which might befall us in the way, either by turning it aside, or turning it finally to our advantage, so that we shall not perish, but see our labours happily begun and ended in him; he "shall preserve our going out, and our "coming in," until, through all the vicissitudes of this mortal state, he shall have brought us into his holy "temple," there to become "pillars," and to "go no more out." Rev. iii. 12.

PSALM CXXII.

ARGUMENT.

The author of this Psalm, as we are informed by its title, was David. The subject of it is that joy which the people were wont to express upon their going up in companies to keep a feast at Jerusa-

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lem, when the divine services were regulated, and that city was appointed to be the place of public worship. Every thing which can be said upon this topic, must naturally hold good in its application to the Christian church, and the celebration of her feasts; at which seasons the believer will as naturally extend his thoughts to the Jerusalem above, and to that festival which shall one day be there kept by all the people of God.

1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the* LORD.

Great was the joy of an Israelite, when his brethren called upon him to accompany them on some festive occasion, to the tabernacle, or temple at Jerusalem; great is the joy of a Christian, when he is invited, in like manner, to celebrate the feasts of the church, to commemorate the nativity, or the resurrection, and to eat and drink at the table of his Lord. Such, in kind, but far greater in degree, is that gladness, which the pious soul experiences, when she is called hence; when descending angels say unto her, Thy labour and sorrow are at an end, and the hour of thy enlargement is come; put off mortality and misery at once; quit the house of bondage, and the land of thy captivity; fly forth, and "let us go "together into the house of the LORD, not made "with hands, eternal in the heavens."

2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!*

Yes, O thou holy and happy city of peace, and

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love, and everlasting delight, our God will in time bring us to behold, and to enter thee; "our feet," which now, with many a weary step, tread the earth, "shall" one day "stand within thy gates," which are opened to all believers; we shall at length rest in thy celestial mansions, and converse for ever with thy blessed inhabitants!

3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.

We see thee not, indeed, as yet, but we hear of thy stability, thy unity, thy beauty, and thy magnificence. Thy foundations are firm upon the holy hills; they are garnished with all manner of precious stones; and in them are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Thy gates are of pearl, twelve in number, and open to all quarters, for the tribes of the spiritual Israel to come in. Thy streets are of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; thou art crowned with the unfading brightness of eternal glory; and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple in the midst of thee. All these glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God! And yet, when we come to see thee with our eyes, we shall be forced to confess, as the queen of Sheba did upon viewing the earthly Jerusalem, with its material temple, and the court of its mortal king, that thou far "exceedest the fame which we had "heard," and that "the half was not told us." 1 Kings x. 7.

4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, *unto,* or, *according to, the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the* LORD.

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As all the "tribes" of Israel, three times in the year, were seen "going up" to the old Jerusalem in compliance with the "testimonies," the injunctions and institutions of their law, to acknowledge the mercies, and to give thanks unto the name of "Je-"hovah," who had done such great things for them; so from the ends of the earth are the redeemed of the Lord, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, continually ascending, by faith and charity, to the new Jerusalem. St. John saw the nations of them that were saved, walking in the light of the heavenly city, and he heard her streets resound with the hallelujahs of ten thousand times ten thousand.

5. *For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David.*

The Israelites resorted to Jerusalem, because it was the metropolis of the country, and there was the residence of their monarchs, after the kingdom was established in "the house of David." But, alas! that metropolis is desolate, and "the thrones of "judgement," which were therein, have been long since cast down to the ground. A Jerusalem, however, remains, which shall never be moved; in that Jerusalem is the throne of eternal judgement erected, and the Son of David sitteth upon it. Of him it was said by the angel to Mary, "The Lord God shall "give unto him the throne of his father David: and "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, "and of his kingdom there shall be no end:" Luke i. 32. And he himself thus addressed his apostles: "Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed "me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall

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"sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon "twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. xix. 28.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*

In this latter part of our Psalm, the members of the Israelitish church are exhorted to pray for its peace and welfare. What that church was, the Christian church militant upon earth now is, and demandeth, in like manner, the prayers of all Christian people for its peace and welfare in a troublesome and contentious world. Its increase here below, is in reality the increase of Jerusalem above, of which it is a part, and ought to be a resemblance. Heaven has therefore decreed, that they who contribute their labours, as well as their prayers, to promote so good and so glorious an end, shall enjoy its protection, and its blessing shall be upon the work of their hands; "They shall prosper that love thee."

7. *Peace be within thy walls*, and *prosperity*, or, *plenteousness, within thy palaces.*

Come, O thou divine Spirit of peace and love, who didst reside in the soul of the holy Jesus, descend into his mystical body, and fill us, who compose it, with all his heavenly tempers; put an end to heresies, heal all schisms, cause bitter contentions to cease, abolish every enmity, and make us to be of one mind in thy holy city; that so, "peace being "within her walls," her citizens may give themselves to every profitable employment, and "plenteous-"ness" of grace, wisdom, and truth, as well as of earthly blessings, may be in all her "palaces." Thus

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will she become a lively portrait of that place which is prepared for them that love one another, where, with one heart and one voice, they shall ascribe "salvation and glory to God and to the Lamb."

8. *For my brethren and companion's sake, I will now say,* Peace be *within thee.* 9. *Because of the house of the* LORD *our God I seek thy good.*

In these concluding verses, the Psalmist declareth the two motives, which induced him to utter his best wishes, and to use his best endeavours, for the prosperity of Jerusalem; namely, love of his brethren, whose happiness was involved in that of their city; and love of God, who had there fixed the residence of his glory. These motives are ever in force, and ought, surely, to operate with marvellous energy upon our hearts, to stir us up to imitate the pattern now before us, in fervent zeal and unwearied labour, for the salvation of men, and the glory of their great Redeemer; both which will then be complete, when the church militant shall become triumphant, and the heavenly paradise shall be filled with plants taken from its terrestrial nursery.

Theodore Zuinger, of whom some account may be found in Thuanus, when he lay on his death-bed, took his leave of the world, in a paraphrase on the foregoing Psalm; giving it the same turn with that given to it above. I have never been able to get a sight of the original*; but one may venture, I be-

* Since the publication of the first edition, a learned friend has obliged me with a copy of these Latin verses of Zuinger, transcribed from the 303d page of Vitæ Germanorum Medicorum, by Melchior Adamus. They are as follow:

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lieve, to say, that it has lost nothing in a translation of it by the late learned and pious Mr. Merrick; which is so excellent, that I must beg leave to present it to the reader. Some of the lines are retained in his more literal poetical version, published in

O lux candida, lux mihi
Læti conscia transitus!
Per Christi meritum patet
  Vitæ porta beatæ.
Me status revocat dies
Augustam Domini ad domum:
Jam sacra ætherii premam
  Lætus limina templi.
Jam visam Solymæ edita
Cœlo culmina, et ædium
Cœtus angelicos, suo et
  Augustam populo urbem:
Urbem quam procul infimis
Terræ finibus exciti
Petunt Christiadæ, et Deum
  Laudent voce perenni:
Jussam cœlitus oppidis
Urbem jus dare cæteris,
Et sedem fore Davidis
  Cuncta in sæcla beati.
Mater nobilis urbium!
Semper te bona pax amat:
Et te semper amantibus
  Cedunt omnia recte.
Semper pax tua mœnia
Colit; semper in atriis
Tuis copia dexterâ
  Largâ munera fundit.
Dulcis Christiadûm domus,
Civem adscribe novitium;
Sola comitata Caritas—
  Spesque Fidesque valete.

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1765. It may serve as a finished specimen of the noble and exalted use which a Christian may and ought to make of the Psalms of David.

PSALM CXXII.

I.

What joy, while thus I view the day
That warns my thirsting soul away,
What transports fill my breast!
For, lo, my great Redeemer's pow'r
Unfolds the everlasting door,
And leads me to his rest.

II.

The festal morn, my God, is come,
That calls me to the hallow'd dome,
Thy presence to adore;
My feet the summons shall attend,
With willing steps thy courts ascend,
And tread th' ethereal floor.

III.

E'en now to my expecting eyes
The heav'n-built towers of Salem rise;
E'en now, with glad survey,
I view her mansions, that contain
Th' angelic forms, an awful train,
And shine with cloudless day.

IV.

Hither from earth's remotest end,
Lo, the redeem'd of God ascend,

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Their tribute hither bring:
Here, crown'd with everlasting joy,
In hymns of praise their tongues employ,
And hail th' immortal King:

V.

Great Salem's King; who bids each state
On her decrees dependent wait;
In her, ere time begun,
High on eternal base uprear'd,
His hands the regal seat prepar'd,
For Jesse's favour'd son.

VI.

Mother of cities! O'er thy head
See Peace, with healing wings outspread,
Delighted fix her stay.
How blest, who calls himself thy friend!
Success his labours shall attend,
And safely guard his way.

VII.

Thy walls, remote from hostile fear,
Nor the loud voice of tumult hear,
Nor war's wild wastes deplore
There smiling Plenty takes her stand,
And in thy courts with lavish hand
Has pour'd forth all her store.

VIII.

Let me, blest seat, my name behold
Among thy citizens enroll'd,

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In thee for ever dwell.
Let charity my steps attend,
My sole companion and my friend,
And faith and hope farewell!

PSALM CXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth, 1, 2. an act of confidence in God, with, 3, 4. a prayer for deliverance from that reproach and contempt which infidelity and sensuality are wont to pour upon the afflicted people of God.

1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*

The church, when distressed and persecuted upon earth, "lifteth up her eyes to him that dwelleth in "the heavens;" from thence beholding and ordering all things here below. It is by his permission that she is depressed and insulted; and he only can deliver her out of the hands of her enemies.

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the* LORD *our God, until that he have mercy upon us.*

The servants of God, like other servants, if they are injured and suffer violence, expect redress and protection from the Master whose they are, and

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whom they serve. Under the law of Moses, a master was to demand satisfaction, and to have it made him, for any hurt done to his servant. And shall not the best of masters avenge the wrongs done to those who serve him; and done, perhaps, because they serve him? Without doubt, he will avenge them speedily, and reward the sufferers gloriously.

3. *Have mercy upon us,* O LORD, *have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* 4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease,* and *with the contempt of the proud.*

Unbelieving, ungodly, and worldly men, who are "at ease," and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, will always be ready to cast upon the afflicted servants of Christ some portion of that reproach and contempt, which were so plentifully poured upon their blessed Master, in the day of his passion, and indeed through his whole life. With these they may justly complain that "their souls are exceedingly "filled," insomuch that they are compelled to exclaim with redoubled earnestness, "Have "mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us." And let them know, for their comfort, that the Lord will "have mercy upon them" in that day, when sensuality shall be succeeded by torment, and pride shall end in shame and confusion; when patient poverty shall inherit everlasting riches, and oppressed humility shall be exalted to a throne above the stars.

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PSALM CXXIV.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, which, as we are informed by the title, hath David for its author, the church describeth the danger in which she had been, and giveth to God alone the glory of her deliverance out of it.

1. *If* it had not been *the* LORD *who was on our side, now may Israel say;* 2. *If* it had not been *the* LORD *who was on our side, when men rose up against us:* 3. *Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.*

The people of Israel, rescued from impending ruin, break forth into a joyful acknowledgement of that almighty aid, to which they were indebted for their deliverance. "Men" rose up against them, but "Jehovah" was on their side; men intended to devour, but God interposed to save. May not "the "Israel of God" say, in like manner, "If the "Lord had not been on our side," when our spiritual enemies, sin, death, and hell, were in arms against us, surely now "they had swallowed us up quick," and we had perished everlastingly? It is thou, O Lord Jesu, who hast wrought for us this great salvation; it is thou who from the beginning hast preserved thy church in the world, amidst the persecutions which must otherwise have put an end to its very existence.

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4. Then the waters had overwhelmed us; the stream, or, *torrent, had gone over our soul: 5. Then the proud,* or, *swelling, waters had gone over our soul.*

The redeemed are astonished, upon looking back, at the greatness of the danger to which they had been exposed. They can compare the fury and insolence of their adversaries to nothing but overwhelming floods and desolating torrents; and they consider themselves as snatched by a miracle from instant destruction. Happy they, who are taken from the evil to come, and have passed from the miseries of earth to the felicities of heaven, where they are neither tempted nor molested more. The devout Christian, whom in perilous times, and towards the close of life, a gracious Providence has thrown ashore in some sequestered corner, from whence he views those secular tumults with which he hath no farther concern, is perhaps arrived at the next degree of happiness to that of just spirits made perfect.

6. *Blessed be the* LORD, *who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.*

The marvellous deliverance of Israel is illustrated by two other images. It is compared to the escape of a lamb from the jaws of a wolf, or a lion; and to that of a bird, by the breaking of the snare, in which it had been entangled, before the fowler came to seize and to kill it. Save us, O God, from the rage and the subtilty of our spiritual adversary; save us from his teeth, when he would devour; from his

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snares, when he would deceive: suffer us not, either by persecution or temptation, to fall from thee; let the lion gnash his teeth, and the fowler look for his captive, in vain; that so we too may sing the song of Zion in thy heavenly kingdom, and say, "Blessed "be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey "unto their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird "out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken "and we are escaped."

8. *Our help is in the name of the* LORD, *who made heaven and earth.*

The great lesson which this Psalm, from the beginning to the end, inculcates, is, that for every deliverance, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, we should, in imitation of the saints above, ascribe "Salvation to God and to the Lamb."

PSALM CXXV.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the church is comforted with the promises, 1, 2. of God's protection, and, 3. of his removing, in due time, from his inheritance the rod of the oppressor; when, 4. the faithful will be rewarded, and, 5. apostates punished with other workers of iniquity. Aben Ezra, as cited by Dr. Hammond, applieth the Psalm to the days of Messiah.

1. *They that trust in the* LORD shall be *as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*

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2. As *the mountains* are *round about Jerusalem, so the* LORD is *round about his people from henceforth even for ever.*

The stability of the church, and the protection afforded her by Jehovah, were of old represented by the mountain on which the divine presence resided, and by the hills which encompassed Jerusalem, so as to render that city in a manner impregnable. While her inhabitants continued to "trust in the Lord," this was the case. But when they became faithless and disobedient, she became weak, and like another city. Let not our "trust in God" be a presumptuous, ungrounded assurance; but let it be a confidence springing from faith unfeigned, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and fervent charity. Then shall our situation, whether as a church, or as individuals, resemble that of the holy mount in the beloved city, and our God will be unto us a fortress, and a wall round about. But let us never forget, that the promises to us, like those to Israel, are conditional: "Because of unbelief they were broken "off; and we stand by faith."

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous: lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*

God may, and often doth, permit "the rod" or power "of the wicked to fall upon the lot of the "righteous" in this world. But it is only for the purposes of chastisement, or probation. The rod is not suffered to "rest," or abide, there too long, "lest the righteous," harassed and worn down by oppression, and seeing no end of their calamities

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should be tempted to "put their hands to iniquity," and practise that wickedness, which they find to prosper so well here below. The import of this verse seemeth to be the same with that of our Lord's prediction concerning the troubles of the latter days. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not "since the beginning of the world to this time, no "nor ever shall be. And except those days should "be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

4. *Do good, O* LORD, *unto* those that be *good, and to* them that are *upright in heart.* 5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the* LORD *shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace* shall be *upon Israel.*

The "good and upright in heart" are they who stand steady in every change of circumstances; who complain not of God's dispensations, but, believing every thing to be best which he ordains, adhere to him with a will entirely conformed to his, in adversity no less than in prosperity. To these Jehovah will finally "do good;" and they shall receive the reward of their faith and patience; while such as, in time of trial, have fallen away, and returned no more, shall be "led forth" to punishment "with the workers "of iniquity," to whose company their apostasy hath joined them. And then, "peace shall be "upon the Israel of God," with joy and gladness, for evermore.

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXVI.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the children of Zion, 1—3. describe the joy consequent upon their restoration from captivity; 4. they pray God to bring back the rest of their countrymen, and to complete his work; 5, 6. they foresee and predict the success of their labours in rebuilding their ruined city with its temple, and cultivating again their desolated country. The return of Israel from Babylon holds forth a figure of the same import with the exodus of that people from Egypt. And this Psalm, like the prophecies of Isaiah, representeth the blessed effects of a spiritual redemption, in words primarily alluding to that temporal release.

1. *When the* LORD *turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*

That Cyrus should issue a decree for the Jews to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city and temple; that he should dismiss such a number of captives, not only without money and without price, but should send them home laden with presents; Ezra i. 1—4. this was the work of Jehovah, who only could thus "turn the captivity of Zion."

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A restoration so complete, so strange and unlooked for, brought about at once, without any endeavours used on the side of Israel, seemed in all these respects, as a "dream;" and the parties concerned, when they saw and heard such things, could scarcely believe themselves to be awake. That the King of kings, of his own mere love and mercy, should take pity on poor mankind, in their more grievous captivity under sin and death; that he should send his only Son to purchase their liberty, his Spirit to enrich, and conduct them to their country above, and his heralds to proclaim such unexpected deliverance to all the world; this likewise was the work of the same Jehovah, who only could THUS "turn again "the captivity of his Zion." Sinners, when the tidings of a salvation so great and marvellous are preached to them, think themselves in a "dream," and with difficulty give credit even to the royal proclamation, though the great seal of heaven be affixed to it.

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The* LORD *hath done great things for them.* 3. *The* LORD *hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*

The people of God soon find, that they are not mocked with illusions, but that all about them is reality and truth. Then sorrow and sighing, fear and distrust, fly away together. Joy fills their hearts, and overflows by their tongues, in songs of praise. The nations hear, and are astonished, and own the hand of Jehovah in the restoration of his people; "Jeho-

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"vah hath done great things for them." The chosen people echo back the gladsome sound, and reply, with transports of gratitude, "Jehovah hath done "great things for us, whereof we are glad." Every word of this agreeth not more exactly to the return from Babylon, than it doth to that eternal redemption thereby prefigured, which is the grand subject of thanksgiving in the Christian church.

4. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, *as the streams in the south.*

The joy occasioned by Cyrus's proclamation having been described in the former part of the Psalm, we may now suppose some of the Jews ready to set out on their return home; at which time, and during their journey, they prefer this petition to God, that he would be pleased to bring back the rest of their countrymen, who like "floods" rolling down upon the thirsty regions of the "south*," might people the land, and by their labours put an end to the desolations of Judah. That God would daily increase the number of true converts from the world to the

* I think the image is taken from the "torrents" in the deserts to the south of Judea: in Idumæa, Arabia Petræa, &c. a mountainous country. These torrents were continually dried up in the summer; see Job xi. 17, 18. and as constantly "return-"ed" after the rainy season, and filled again their deserted channels. The point of the comparison seems to be the "return" and renewal of these (not "rivers") but "torrents;" which yearly leave their beds dry, but fill them again; as the Jews had left their country desolate, but now "flowed again" into it. Bishop LOWTH, in MERRICK'S Annotations.—Dr. DURRELL renders this verse as follows—"The turning of our captivity, O "Lord, is as streams in the south."

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church, to clear and cultivate the mystical vineyard, to build and to ornament the whole city, should be the prayer of every labourer in that vineyard, of every citizen in that city.

5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* 6. *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves* with him.

The fatigue of travelling from Babylon to Judea; the melancholy prospect of a long-depopulated country, and ruined city; the toil necessary to be undergone, before the former could be again brought into order, and the latter rebuilt; all these considerations could not but allay the joy of the released captives, and even draw many tears from their eyes. They are therefore comforted with a gracious promise, that God would give a blessing to the labours of their hands, and crown them with success, so that they should once more see Jerusalem in prosperity, and behold in Zion the beauty of holiness. This promise is conveyed under images borrowed from the instructive scenes of agriculture. In the sweat of his brows the husbandman tills his land, and casts the seed into the ground, where, for a time, it lies dead and buried. A dark and dreary winter succeeds, and all seems to be lost. But at the return of spring, universal nature revives, and the once-desolated fields are covered with corn, which, when matured by the sun's heat, the cheerful reapers cut down, and it is brought home with triumphant shouts of joy. Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour, and thy future reward. Thou "sowest," perhaps, "in

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"tears;" thou doest thy duty amidst persecution and affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; thou labourest in the church, and no account is made of thy labours; no profit seems likely to arise from them. Nay, thou must thyself drop into the dust of death, and all the storms of that winter must pass over thee until thy farm shall be perished, and thou shalt see corruption. Yet, the day is coming, when thou shalt "reap in joy;" and plentiful shall be thy harvest. For thus thy blessed Master "went forth weeping, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, "bearing precious seed," and sowing it around him, till at length his own body was buried, like a grain of wheat, in the furrow of the grave. But he arose, and is now in heaven; from whence he "shall doubt-"less come again with rejoicing," with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "bringing "his sheaves with him." Then shall every man receive the fruit of his works, and have praise of God.

PSALM CXXVII.

ARGUMENT.

If this Psalm were written by Solomon, or by David for Solomon, as the title importeth, it was probably used again at the time of rebuilding the city and temple, after the return from Babylon. But indeed it is a Psalm which can never be out of season the design of its author being to teach us the

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necessity of a dependence upon God and his blessing, in every work to which we set our hands. What is said with regard to an earthly house, city, and family, extendeth also to the spiritual house, city, and family of Christ, which are now, what Jerusalem, the temple, and the people of Israel, were in old time.

1. *Except the* LORD *build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the* LORD *keep the city, the watchman waketh* but *in vain.*

In every undertaking, the blessing of God must accompany the labours of man, to render them effectual. No work can prosper without Him, nor can any design miscarry under his favour and protection, which are equally necessary to be obtained by the builder in time of peace, and by the soldier in time of war. But they, above all men, ought to implore the divine grace and benediction, who are employed either in building or defending the spiritual house and city of God; especially as the same persons, like the Jews after the captivity, surrounded by enemies always ready to obstruct the work, are often obliged to hold a sword in one hand, while they build with the other. Our own edification in faith and holiness must likewise be carried on by us in this attitude, by reason of the many temptations which are continually assailing us. It may also be remarked, that both Solomon and Zerubbabel had vainly laboured to construct the first or the second material temple, unless Jehovah himself had built the true house for the

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reception of his glory, that is to say, the temple of Christ's body, and, after it was fallen down, had reared it again by a resurrection from the dead.

2. It is *vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows:* for *so he giveth his beloved sleep.*

The Psalmist doth not, certainly, intend to say, that labour and diligence are vain, but that they are so, except the Lord be with the labourer: the business is not to be done by all the industry and pains, all the carking and caring in the world, without Him; whereas, if his aid be called in, if part of our time be spent in prayer, not the whole of it in prayerless toiling and moiling, our work will become easier, and go on better; a solicitude and anxiety for its success and completion will no longer prey upon our minds by day, and break our rest at night; we shall cheerfully fulfil our daily tasks, and then, with confidence and resignation, lay our heads upon our pillows, and God will "give to his beloved" a sweet and undisturbed "sleep," which shall fit them to return every morning, with renewed vigour and alacrity, to their stated employments. This seemeth to be the import of the verse. An obscurity has been occasioned in the translations, by rendering the adverb כֵּן so; "so he giveth his beloved sleep;" in which form, this last part of the verse will not connect with what goes before. But if, כֵּן be translated, like its kindred particle, אָכֵן, "SURELY* he giveth

* This is the second of the senses given to this particle by Noldius, who cites, in confirmation of it, 1 Sam. ix. 13. 1 Kings xx. 40.

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" his beloved sleep;" or, as Dr. Hammond renders it, " SINCE he giveth his beloved sleep," the difficulty will vanish, and the sense appear to be as above. Nor can we easily find a more profitable piece of instruction, with regard to the management of all our concerns, temporal and spiritual.

3. *Lo, children* are *an heritage of the* LORD: and *the fruit of the womb* is his *reward.*

The labours of mankind, first in building houses and cities, and then in guarding and securing their possessions, are undergone, not with a view to themselves alone, but to their families, which they would establish and perpetuate. The Psalmist, therefore, in the preceding verses, having taught men to expect a happy settlement only from the favour of Jehovah, now directs them to look up to him for the farther blessing of a numerous and virtuous progeny. He can in a moment blast the most fruitful stock, or he can " make the barren woman to keep house, and to " become a joyful mother of children." " Lo, chil- " dren are an heritage of Jehovah;" an heritage which he bestows on those who fear him; " the fruit of the " womb is a reward" conferred by him, where he sees it will be a blessing indeed, upon faithful and pious parents. St. Paul calls the converts made by his ministry, his " children;" and all believers are the children of Christ, the " heritage" given him by his Father, the " reward" of his righteous life, and meritorious death; as it is written, " I will give " thee the heathen for thine inheritance:" " He shall " see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Psalm ii. 8. Isa. liii. 11.

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4. *As arrows* are *in the hand of a mighty man; so* are *children of the youth.*

Children, when well educated, are like so many "arrows in the hand of a strong man," ready winged with duty and love, to fly to the mark; polished and keen, to grace and maintain the cause of their parents, to defend them from hostile invasions, and instantly to repel every assailant. The apostles and first Christians were arrows in the hand of Messiah, with which he encountered his enemies, and subdued the nations to the faith. When by the splendour of their sanctity, the power of their miracles, and the efficacy of their preaching, they pierced the hearts of thousands and ten thousands, what were they but "arrows in the hand of גבר, the Mighty One?" And in this instance likewise it may truly be said, that no well-nurtured son of Christ and the church will hear his father dishonoured, or despise his mother when she is old.

5. *Happy* is *the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

In a house full of dutiful children consisteth the happiness of their parents, who then can never want friends; friends, that will at no time be "ashamed," but will at all times rejoice to appear for them, to meet their "enemies" and accusers "in the gate," or place of judgment *; there to answer any charge

* Mr. Merrick observes, that the gate was sometimes the seat of war, as well as the place of judicature. "Then was war in "the gates;" Judges v. 8. He mentions a remarkable Chinese

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against them, to vindicate them in their persons, their good name, or their property. It is a glorious sight to behold children thus standing forth in the defence of their parents. In the multitude of true believers consist the glory of Christ, and the riches of the church. How forward were the primitive Christians to meet the enemies of these their spiritual parents "in the gate;" how ready, in their cause, to speak openly, and, having witnessed a good confession, to die by the hand of the executioner! Therefore shall they not be ashamed at the judgement of the last day, but shall then stand with great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted, persecuted, and tormented them. For their heavenly Father will then be their Judge, and will own, in his turn, the cause of his dutiful children, who for his sake endured tribulation, and loved not their lives unto the death. Confusion shall overwhelm the accuser of the brethren, with all the instruments of his malice; but glory, honour, and immortality, shall be given to the children of God.

PSALM CXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth a promise made to him who, 1. feared Jehovah, and walked in his ways, that he should be blessed, 2. in his person, and, 3, 4. in his family, and that he should see the good of

proverb: "When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow "are hung before the gate."

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Jerusalem. The Psalm was, probably, sung at the marriages of the Israelites, as it is now a part of the matrimonial service among us. In its prophetical and exalted sense, it hath respect to the person, marriage, family, and city, of Messiah.

1. *Blessed* is *every one that feareth the* LORD: *that walketh in his ways.*

Happiness belongeth not to the rich, the powerful, and the prosperous, as such; but in every state and condition, blessed is the man that "feareth Jehovah," that so feareth him as to obey him, and to "walk in "his ways," notwithstanding all the obstructions he may meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Blessed above all the sons of men, and the author of blessing to them all, was the man Christ Jesus, because above them all, and for them all, he feared, he loved, and he obeyed.

2. *For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy* shalt *thou* be, *and* it shall be *well with thee.*

The person is here beautifully changed, and to the man who feareth Jehovah is addressed an enumeration of those blessings which shall attend him. He is to "eat the labour of his hands," that is, the fruit, or returns of his labours. Hereby it is implied, that he is not to be idle, but to "labour," that he may eat; that he is not to be niggardly, but to "eat," when he has laboured; that he is neither to be unjust, by living upon the labours, nor enslaved, by depending upon the bounty, of others, but to eat of "his own" labours; and that he, whose labours pro-

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cure him a sustenance, hath enough to be "blessed" and happy. "Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be "well with thee:" every thing shall happen, which God seeth to be best for thee in this life, and (as saith the Chaldee Paraphrast on the place) "it shall "be good to thee in the world to come." The glory of Christ, and the salvation of mankind, were the fruits of his actions and his sufferings in the days of his flesh; so that, in the enjoyment of them, he doth no more than "eat of the labours of his hands;" or, to use the words of Isaiah, "he seeth of the travail "of his soul, and is satisfied." Before he went hence, he took comfort in the reflection, "I have glorified "thee on the earth, I have finished the work which "thou gavest me to do:" John xvii. 4. Happy shalt thou be, O Christian, and it shall be well with thee, if at thy latter end thou shalt be able to draw comfort from the same consideration.

3. *Thy wife* shall be *as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*

Marriage was ordained by God to complete the felicity of man in a state of innocence; and the benediction of heaven will ever descend upon it, when undertaken in "the fear of the Lord." The vine, a lowly plant, raised with tender care, becoming, by its luxuriancy, its beauty, its fragrance, and its clusters, the ornament and glory of the house to which it is joined, and by which it is supported, forms the finest imaginable emblem of a fair, virtuous, and faithful wife. The olive-trees planted by the inhabitants of the eastern countries around their tables, or banquet-

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ing-places in their gardens*, to cheer the eye by their verdure, and to refresh the body by their cooling shade, do no less aptly and significantly set forth the pleasure which parents feel, at the sight of a numerous and flourishing offspring. As marriage was from the beginning intended to represent the mystical union between Christ and his church, which union is spoken of in matrimonial language, through the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, we need but extend our view, to behold, under the imagery of the vine and the olive-plants, the prolific spouse of Messiah, and the children of peace assembled round the table of their heavenly Father. See Psalm lxxx. 8. Rom. xi. 17.

4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

Are temporal blessings, then, the reward of piety? They are not its only, nor chief reward, but are often "added," even under the new dispensation, to those who "first seek the kingdom of God, and his righ-"teousness." When they are withholden, or withdrawn, it is for the security or increase of those more valuable blessings which are spiritual. There are times, when father, mother, brethren, sisters, wife, children, and lands, must be given up for Christ's and

* This is bishop Patrick's idea. The learned and ingenious Mr. Harmer, in his very valuable "Observations on divers Pas-"sages of Scripture," (Vol. I. p. 197, 2d edit.) disapproves of it: as, he says, "we find no such arbours in the Levant, nor is "the tree very proper for the purpose. He thinks therefore the "table" refers to the "children" only, and not to the "olives." But Mr. Merrick, in his Annotations, produces some very good arguments on the side of bishop Patrick.

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the Gospel's sake. But ample amends are promised to be made to all who thus part with earthly relations and possessions. They find in the church other fathers, mothers, brethren, sisters, children, &c. and at the resurrection they will "inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. and brighter coronets of glory shall sparkle from their heads. The Scriptures show us the servants of God in every state and condition; we view them rich and poor, honoured and despised, sick and in health, married and single, childless and otherwise, in prosperity and in adversity; to teach us, that all things work together for good to them who love God: so that the believer hath comfort always. If temporal blessings be granted him, he accepteth them as shadows of those which are eternal; if they are denied, he remembereth that they are only shadows, and are therefore denied, that he may fix his thoughts and affections more firmly on the substance.

5. *The* LORD *shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, all the days of thy life.* 6. *Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children,* and *peace upon Israel.*

Every true Israelite rejoiceth in the prosperity of Zion; a blessing upon the church diffuseth itself to all the members thereof; and the good of Jerusalem, with peace upon Israel, is all the good we can desire to see upon earth. Hereafter we shall see greater things than these. Jehovah from the heavenly Zion will bless us with the vision of his immortal glory; we shall see the good of the new Jerusalem, the wealth, beauty, and majesty of that holy city; we shall see the generations of the faithful walking in

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the light of it; with that everlasting peace and rest, which remain for the Israel of God. These are the blessings promised to Messiah, and to his seed, for evermore.

PSALM CXXIX.

ARGUMENT.

In the former part of this Psalm, 1—4. the church declareth herself to have been often assailed and persecuted by her enemies, but as often rescued and preserved by Jehovah; in the latter part of it, 5—8. she predicteth the miserable end of all those who hate Zion.

1. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.*

Affliction is nothing new to the people of God. Many a time have the righteous been under persecution, from the hour when Cain rose up against his brother Abel, to this day. Like the bush which Moses beheld in the desert, the church hath "burned with fire," but is not yet "consumed;" and for the same reason, because God is in the midst of her *.

* Ecclesia jam inde ab initio in Abel, in Enoch, in Noë, in Abraham, in Lot, in Egyptiacâ servitute, in Moyse, et Prophetis, graves perpessa inimicos: dicit illa quidem sæpe a juventute se fuisse oppugnatam; nihilo tamen seciùs pervenisse ad senectutem, ac ne in senectute quidem opprimi posse. Victus enim qui sæviebat, vicit qui sufferebat. BOSSUET.

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He who took our nature upon him, was also "afflicted from his youth," but his enemies "prevailed not finally against him." And it is observable, that what God spake, by his prophet Hosea, concerning Israel, "When Israel was a child, then I "loved him, and called my son out of Egypt," is by St. Matthew applied to Christ; "Joseph took the "young child and his mother by night, and departed "into Egypt, and was there until the death of "Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken "by the prophet, Out of Egypt have I called my "son:" Matt. ii. 14. Hos. xi. 1. The truth is, that there subsisted between Christ and the church an union like that between the head and the members of the same body; they are therefore called by the same name, ISRAEL, and what is said concerning one, frequently admitteth of an application to the other. He became like us by taking our nature, and we become like him by receiving his grace. Our sufferings are accounted as his; and his righteousness spoken of as ours.

3. *The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.* 4. *The* LORD *is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*

The former of these two verses expresseth a state of great affliction, the latter, a deliverance from that state. The word חרש, which signifies to dig, or cut the ground, and so, to plow, is also used simply for cutting, carving, or graving; see Exod. xxxv. 33. Jer. xvii. 1. Being here applied to the back of captives, and cords having been the instruments of it, in all reason it is to be understood of scourging, which

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cuts, and, as it were, digs, and plows, and makes furrows in the flesh; and the longer the cord of the scourges are, the longer are the wounds and furrows. For our sakes he who knew no sin "gave his back "to the smiters," Isa. l. 6.: and permitted those "plowers to make long their furrows upon it." But "the righteous Lord cut asunder the cords of the "wicked;" vengeance overtook the wretched instruments of his sufferings; and the persecutors of his servants shall perish in like manner, as the Psalmist proceedeth to assure us in the verses following.

5. *Let them all*, or, *they all shall, be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.*

Since the ways of God are equal, the destruction which hath lighted on former persecutors of the church affordeth an assurance, that all, in every age, who hate Zion, shall, at the day of final retribution, if not before that day, feel the weight of his arm, who is the Saviour, the King, and the God of Zion.

6. *Let them*, or, *they shall, be as the grass* upon *the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up:* Heb. *is pulled up* *. 7. *Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand: nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.* 8. *Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the* LORD be *upon you: we bless you in the name of the* LORD.

The transient prosperity of mortal man is often in sacred writ compared to grass, the history of which

* Mr. Harmer takes the idea of the Psalmist to be, "Which "withereth before it unsheaths its ear." Observ. II. 463.

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is contained in these few words, " It cometh up, and " is cut down." But here the comparison is carried still farther. Not the common grass in the field, but " grass growing on the house-tops," is selected to convey the idea of bad men; grass, which having no depth of earth, into which it may strike its roots, doth not wait the hand of the gatherer, but " withereth" even " before it is plucked up." And then, so thin, so wretched, and so unprofitable, is the crop, that none are employed to collect and carry it in; none to whom passengers might address those acclamations and salutations, customary at such times, as " The LORD be with you, bless you," &c. Ruth ii. 4. Thus, while the felicity of Zion's children is rooted and grounded in Christ, that of her enemies hath no foundation at all. While the church subsisteth from generation to generation, the kingdoms and empires, that have persecuted her, fade and wither away of themselves. And at the general harvest of the world, when the righteous shall be carried by angels, with joyful acclamations, into the mansions prepared for them above, the wicked, unregarded by the heavenly reapers, and unblessed by all, shall become fuel for a fire that goeth not out; resembling, in this their sad end, likewise, that worthless grass, " which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast " into the oven."

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PSALM CXXX.

ARGUMENT.

This is the sixth of those which are styled "Penitential Psalms." It is calculated for the use of the church, or any member thereof; and containeth, 1, 2. a complaint of great distress; 3. a confession of man's sinfulness; 4—8. an act of faith in the divine mercy, and the promised redemption.

1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O* LORD. 2. LORD, *hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

From the depths of sin, and the misery occasioned by sin, the penitent, like another Jonas, entombed in the whale's belly, and surrounded by all the waves of the ocean, crieth unto God for help and salvation. Fervent prayer will find its way, through every obstruction, to the ears of him who sitteth upon his holy hill. And may not the bodies of the faithful, buried in the dust, be said to cry, out of the depths of the grave, for a joyful resurrection, according to the promise and the pattern of Christ, who, after three days, came forth from the heart of the earth, as Jonas did from the belly of the whale?

3. *If thou,* LORD, *shouldest mark iniquities, O* LORD, *who shall stand?*

A reason is here urged, why God should spare and pardon the suppliant, namely, because, was he accu-

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rately to note the offences of the best men, and to produce them in judgement against the offenders, no man could stand in that judgement, but the whole race of Adam must continue to eternity under the dominion of sin and death; which a gracious and merciful God will not permit to be the case. It is accordingly declared in the next verse, that measures had been taken to prevent so deplorable a catastrophe.

4. *But* there is *forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

True repentance is founded upon the sense of our own wretchedness, and faith in the divine mercy. Without the former, we should never seek for pardon and grace; without the latter, we should despair of finding them. The Psalmist, therefore, having in the three preceding verses expressed the one, now maketh profession of the other. "There is forgive-"ness with thee;" thou wilt not "mark iniquities," or leave us to the rigours of strict justice, but thou hast devised means that we perish not for ever: thou hast provided an atonement, and in virtue of that atonement, the sinner may obtain pardon; he need not, therefore, reject thy service, and cast himself away in despair, but is encouraged to serve thee acceptably through faith, with godly fear: "there is "forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Or the meaning may be, Thou forgivest man, that so, being restored to thy favour, and endued with thy grace, he may thenceforth fear, or serve thee, as it becomes one who hath obtained mercy to do.

5. *I wait for the* LORD, *my soul doth wait, and*

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in his word do I hope. 6. *My soul* waiteth *for the* LORD, *more than they that watch for the morning:* I say, more than *they that watch for the morning.*

The repetitions here do beautifully express that ardent desire which the contrite soul hath for the salvation of God. Dr. Hammond seemeth to have given the true construction of ver. 6. נפשי לאדני, "My "soul to the Lord, that is, riseth, cometh, or hasten-"eth to the Lord, משמרים לבקר from the morning "watches, that is, from the time when they hasten to "their watches, in other words, the guards every "morning that hasten to their watches, are not earlier "than I am in my daily addresses to God. Who "these watches or guards of the morning are, the "Chaldee hath best expressed: They that observe "the morning watches, that they may offer their "morning oblation, that is, the priests which in their "turns officiated; or rather, some officers of theirs, "which were peculiarly appointed from a tower to "expect the first appearance of break of day." With such earnestness did the ancient church expect the appearance of that day-spring from on high, which was, in the fulness of time, to visit the world. With equal earnestness have the faithful since looked out for the dawning of that last morning, which is to abolish sin, and put an end to sorrow.

7. *Let Israel hope in the* LORD: *for with the* LORD there is *mercy, and with him* is *plenteous redemption.* 8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,* or, *sins.*

These verses are perfectly evangelical. The church

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of Israel was exhorted to "hope" in Jehovah, because with him there was "mercy, and plenteous re-"demption." And of what nature was that redemption? A redemption from sin; "he shall redeem "Israel from all his SINS;" consequently, from all trouble and misery, which are but the effects of sin, and will cease when their cause shall be finally taken away. Now what is this, but the Gospel itself? or where is the difference between this of the Psalmist, "he shall redeem Israel from all his sins," and that of the Evangelist, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, "for he shall SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS?" Matt. i. 21. The Israel of God, or church universal, "hoping" in the same "mercy" and the same "plenteous redemption," expecteth the full accomplishment of this gracious promise, at the second advent of her Saviour, when the penalty of sin shall be taken off, and death be swallowed up in victory.

PSALM CXXXI.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth, 1, 2. a description of true humility, and resignation to the will of God, with, 3. an exhortation to the practice thereof. It is most probably a Psalm of David, and is eminently applicable to Messiah, in his state of humiliation on earth. Happy would it be for the world, if all his disciples could imbibe the spirit of this

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short but lovely Psalm, and copy after the example which it setteth before them.

1. LORD, *my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*

Pride beginneth in the "heart," and discovereth itself in the "eyes," the countenance, and the carriage; thinking nothing "too high for it," it is always aiming at still "great matters," scheming to be at the top of earthly grandeur; and, when there, restless because it can go no further. Of this disposition the son of David, like his father and representative of old, was by his enemies affirmed to be; he was accused of affecting the sovereignty, and therefore hunted and persecuted even to the death. But how truly do these words of the Psalmist delineate his real character! He was not "haughty," but "meek and lowly in heart;" his "eyes" were not "lofty," but kindly regarded the meanest object that presented itself to them; he looked not to "great matters," and "high things," but chose to be, and to be esteemed, the least and lowest of all.

2. *Surely I have behaved,* or *subdued, and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul* is *even as a weaned child.*

A child newly weaned mourneth because of the favourite aliment which is withdrawn from him, but depending absolutely on the mother for every thing, learneth to acquiesce in her treatment of him, and quietly to accept what it shall please her to give.

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Such was the humble resignation of the Lamb of God to the will of his heavenly Father, under the severest dispensations, when even the divine presence, and that support which it afforded, seemed to have been withdrawn: "Father, into thy hands I "commend my spirit!" Who, then, can expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven, "except he be "converted, and become as a little child?" Matt. xviii. 3.

3. *Let Israel hope in the* LORD *from henceforth and for ever.*

After the example, therefore, of the King of Israel, who thus demeaned himself in his afflictions, lowly, contented, and resigned, casting all his care upon the Father who cared for him, and patiently waiting his time for deliverance and salvation; after this their example and pattern, let his faithful people hope and trust, not in themselves, their wisdom, or their power, but in Jehovah alone, who will not fail to exalt them, as he hath already exalted their Redeemer, if they do but follow his steps.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXII.

ARGUMENT.

This is one of the Proper Psalms, which the church hath appointed to be used on Christmas-day. It containeth, 1—5. a petition that Jehovah would be mindful of the zeal shown by his servant David,

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in preparing a place for his habitation; 6. the exultation of the faithful upon hearing the glad tidings, that God would dwell among them; and, 7. their resolution to worship at the place which he had chosen for that purpose; 8—10. an address to Jehovah, used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple, whence some have thought him to have been the author of the Psalm; 11—18. the substance of God's promises made to David and to his seed. The whole Psalm is perfectly well adapted to the festival of the incarnation, as the following comment will, it is hoped, abundantly demonstrate.

1. LORD, *remember David,* and *all his afflictions:* Israel beseecheth Jehovah to be mindful of those sorrows and sufferings, which had been undergone by his servant David, ere he attained to the throne, and established the ancient church in the beauty of holiness. That God would "remember" the far greater "afflictions" sustained for our sake by Messiah in the days of his humiliation, when, through much tribulation, he accomplished our redemption, and entered into his glory, is the petition preferred, in these words, by us Christians.

2. *How he sware unto the* LORD, and *vowed unto the mighty* GOD *of Jacob;* 3. *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;* 4. *I will not give sleep to mine eyes,* or *slumber to mine eyelids,* 5. *Until I find out a place for the* LORD, *an habitation for the mighty* GOD *of Jacob.*

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In all circumstances and situations, David was solicitous for the tabernacle and service of God. Of the oath and vow here mentioned, we have, indeed, no account in the sacred history; but we read, 2 Sam. vii. 2. of the uneasiness which he expressed to Nathan the prophet, at the thought of his dwelling in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God dwelt only within the curtains of a tent. Nay, we find, by 1 Chron. xvi. 43. that he did not bless, and consequently did not inhabit, his own house, until he had brought the ark to Zion, where the temple was afterwards erected. He could take neither pleasure nor rest, until a place was prepared for the residence of Jehovah in the midst of his people; and from thenceforth he gave himself, with unwearied diligence, to lay in a plentiful store of the most costly materials, silver, gold, and precious stones, which were employed by his son and successor Solomon, in constructing the magnificent and mystic edifice. Thus, in the covenant of grace, did the Son of God engage not to take possession of his heavenly palace, nor to enter into his eternal rest, until he had prepared upon the earth a place for the residence of the Lord; a building framed of materials more precious than gold and silver, more bright and beautiful than rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. All this was planned and executed by one and the same person, who first suffered in meekness and patience, like David, then reigned in glory and peace, like Solomon. The believer should spare no pains, no time, no thought, to find out and prepare in his heart an habitation for the God of Jacob, since our Lord hath graciously

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vouchsafed to make this general promise to us all, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and "we will come unto him, and make our abode with "him." John xiv. 23.

6. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.*

In other words, as bishop Patrick hath paraphrased this verse, "And now, behold, the Lord himself, "to our great joy, hath told us the very place where "he will fix his habitation, 1 Chron. xxi. 18. 26. in "the territory of Bethlehem Ephrata *, Gen. xxxv. "13. 19. in the fields of that forest, where the angel "stood and directed David to build an altar to the "Lord:" 1 Chron. xxi. 18. xxii. 1. Bethlehem Ephratah was the city of David; it was likewise the city wherein the Son of David was born, as the prophet Micah hath foretold: "And thou Bethlehem, "in the land of Judah, art not the least among the "cities of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Go-"vernor, that shall rule my people Israel," Micah v. 2. cited by the chief priests and scribes to Herod, Matt. ii. 6. Christians, as well as Jews, may therefore say, and upon the festival of Christ's nativity, using this Psalm, they do say, "Lo, we heard of it "at Ephratah:" for there the angel first proclaimed the news of the incarnation to the shepherds: "Be-"hold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which "shall be to all people; for unto you is born this

* Jerusalem, as Mr. Merrick observes from Geierus, being situated not far from Bethlehem, might be comprehended in the region of Ephrata; or באפרתה, may be rendered "near "Ephrata."

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"day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is "Christ, the Lord:" Luke ii. 10. There was "found" the true tabernacle and temple, "not made "with hands, the place for Jehovah, the habitation "for the mighty God of Jacob."

7. *We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.*

If this were the resolution of Israelites, who saw the incarnation only in type and figure, how much more ought it to be ours, who live since the accomplishment of that which was foreshown; since the Word, made flesh, hath dwelt upon the earth, and the church hath been erected among the nations? If they worshipped the God of Israel, who then dwelt in the holy of holies between the cherubim, shall not we worship the same divine person, who, though ascended up on high above all heavens, yet hath assured us, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them?

8. *Arise, O* LORD, *into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.*

When the ark marched before the children of Israel to find out a resting-place, it is recorded, Numb. x. 35, 36. that Moses said, "Rise up, Jehovah, "and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them "that hate thee flee before thee;" and when it rested, he said, "Return, or bring back, the many thou-"sands of Israel." The verse before us was used, with the two succeeding verses, by Solomon, as the conclusion of his prayer at the dedication of the temple, 2 Chron. vi. 41. The purport of the petition, therefore, was, that the presence of Jehovah

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might rest upon Zion, and dwell in the house prepared for it, as the same presence hath since dwelt in Christ, and is to be with the Christian church to the end of the world.

9. *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout with joy.*

The ark being placed in the temple, prayer is next made for the ministers of religion, that they might through grace, be invested with righteousness as with a garment, and be both covered and adorned with a robe of inviolable sanctity; that spiritual joy might fill their hearts, and break forth in songs of praise to the Lord God of Israel. Let not those, who have obtained the evangelical priesthood, be exceeded by the sons of Levi, in holiness and alacrity.

10. *For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed.*

Solomon beseecheth God, for the sake of his favourite servant David, and the promises made to him and his seed, that he would not deny the request of David's son, now "anointed" to be king over Israel, and, by so doing, confound, put him to shame, or "turn away his face." That this is the meaning of the phrase, is plain from 1 Kings ii. 16. where Adonijah says to Bathsheba, "And now I ask "one petition of thee, deny me not;" in the Hebrew, "turn not away my face." A Christian asketh nothing but in the name, and for the sake, of the Son of David, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen, and in whom whosoever believeth shall never be confounded, or denied

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that which is really good and profitable for him to receive.

11. *The* LORD *hath sworn* in *truth unto David; he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.*

That this is a prophecy of Messiah, we have the authority of St. Peter to say; Acts ii. 30. "David, "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn "with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, "according to the flesh, he would raise up CHRIST "to sit on his throne," &c. This promise to David occurs, 2 Sam. vii. 12. and hath a twofold sense, relating to Solomon in type and shadow, to Christ in truth and substane. See more on Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4.

12. *If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.*

The promises of God to Christ are absolute; but to his "children," as well as those of David, they are conditional; so that our interest in them dependeth on our faith, our obedience, our perseverance. "Behold," saith St. Paul, "the goodness and seve- "rity of God: on them which fell, severity; but "towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in that "goodness; otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off." Rom. xi. 22.

13. *For the* LORD *hath chosen Zion: he hath desired* it *for his habitation.* 14. *This* is *my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.*

How ineffable is the love of God to man, that he should use such expressions as these concerning his church! He is pleased to say, that it is his desire to

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dwell with us; yet how little do we desire to dwell with him! In Zion he fixed his abode, and there continued, till the iniquities of Israel provoked him to forsake his holy mountain, and to give up Jerusalem for a prey to the spoilers. Since that time, his tabernacle has been removed into the possession of the Gentiles. Forsake not this thy new Zion, O God, and deliver us not thy people, in like manner, sinful as we are, into the hands of the enemy and the avenger.

15. *I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.* 16. *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*

That city in which the King of heaven deigns to place his throne, can want no manner of thing that is good. There will be always plenty of provision for the body and for the soul. The poor will be satisfied with bread, and to the poor in spirit will be given the bread of eternal life. Salvation will God appoint for a wall and a bulwark around the priests and the temple; joy and gladness shall be heard within, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. What a dreadful reverse of all this do we behold in the present state of the once glorious, but now desolated, Jerusalem! Let not any Christian church, after what has happened to that city, be high-minded, but let all fear.

17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*

Bishop Patrick hath well paraphrased this verse: "There, namely, in Jerusalem, will I make the regal

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" power and majesty of David to put forth itself " afresh in his royal successors: no sooner shall one " be extinguished, but another shall shine in such " splendour, as shall give a lustre to the name of that " anointed servant of mine, till the great prince, the " Messiah, appear;" then will the horn of salvation be raised up in the house of David, to subdue the empires of the world, and to vanquish all opposition; then shall the Branch of Jehovah bud into beauty and glory upon the earth; then shall the lamp of Israel become a sun of righteousness, burning and shining with lustre inextinguishable, to all eternity. That this verse doth mystically refer to Christ, the Jews confess, as Dr. Hammond has observed. So saith R. Saadiah, " The Lamp is the King, which " illuminates the nations:" and Kimchi, " The " Horn of David, is the Messias."

18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.*

It is here predicted, that God would blast and bring to nothing every design formed to destroy the house of David, until King Messiah should arise out of it, to sit upon the throne of his father. In him all the promises centre, and the kingdom is established for ever: " His enemies," who will not have him to reign over them, shall, at the last day, be " clothed " with shame," and everlasting confusion; " but " upon himself shall his crown flourish," filling heaven and earth with the brightness of its glory.

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PSALM CXXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

This short but pleasing Psalm was composed either to recommend unity among the tribes of Israel, or to celebrate it when it had taken place. Bishop Patrick justly observes, that "it was as fitly used "by the first Christians, to express their joy for "the blessed union of Jews and Gentiles; and "may now serve the uses of all Christian societies, "whose happiness lies in holy peace and concord." It containeth, 1. a rapturous exclamation on the comforts and advantages of union, which, 2, 3. are illustrated by the two exquisite similitudes of the holy anointing oil and of dew.

1. *Behold, how good and how pleasant* it is, *for brethren to dwell together in unity.*

Many things are good which are not pleasant; and many pleasant, which are not good. But unity among brethren, whether civil or religious, is productive both of profit and pleasure. Of profit, because therein consisteth the welfare and security of every society; of pleasure, because mutual love is the source of delight, and the happiness of one becomes, in that case, the happiness of all. It is unity alone, which gives beauty as well as strength, to the state; which renders the church, at the same

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time, "fair as the moon, and terrible as an army "with banners." Cant. vi. 10.

2. It is *like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments;* 3. *As the dew of Hermon*, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the* LORD *commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

"Unity, beginning in the prince, and diffused "through the people, is here illustrated," saith doctor Delany, "by two images, the most apt and beau-"tiful that ever were imagined. Kingdoms are con-"sidered as bodies politic, of which the king is the "head, and the people, in their several ranks and "orders, the parts and members. A spirit of union "beginning upon the prince, whose person is sacred, "is like oil poured upon the head of Aaron, which "naturally descends, and spreads itself over all the "parts of the body, and diffuses beauty and fra-"grance over the whole, reaching even to the skirts "of the garment. Oil is, without question, the "finest emblem of union that ever was conceived. "It is a substance consisting of very small parts, "which yet, by their mutual adhesion, constitute one "uniform, well united, and useful body. The sacred "oil carries the idea and the advantage of union yet

* Bishop Lowth seemeth fully to have justified our translators in supplying the ellipsis as they have done, and thereby removing the absurdity of making the dew of Hermon, a mountain on one side of Jordan, towards the eastern extremity of Canaan, descend on the mountain of Zion, which was situated on the other side of Jordan, at Jerusalem.

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"farther; which being extracted from various spices, "yet made up one well cohering and more valuable "compound. The next image carries the exhorta- "tion to union, and the advantages of it, still higher. "Hermon was the general name of one mountain, "comprehending many lesser and lower hills, under "the surround of a greater. Union in any nation is "the gift of God; and therefore unity among bre- "thren, beginning from the king, is like the dew of "heaven, which falling first upon the higher summit "of Hermon (refreshing and enriching wherever "it falls), naturally descends to Zion, a lower; and "thence even to the humble valleys. Zion was the "centre of union to all the tribes; there God him- "self had promised his people rest, and peace from "their enemies; which, however, were of little value "without union and harmony among themselves *."

Thus far this learned and pious author, whose explanation of the Psalmist's imagery, as descriptive of civil unity in the state, is so just and elegant, that I could not forbear transcribing the passage at length. It only remains to be added, that these divine pictures receive an additional beauty, and the colouring is much heightened, by their being viewed in another light, as representations of spiritual unity in the church. The spirit of heavenly love was that oil of gladness which Jehovah poured without measure on him who is the high-priest and head of his church. Insinuating and healing, comforting and exhilarating, it is diffused from him over his body mystical, even

* Life of King David, vol. iii. p. 204.

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down to the least and lowest members; "of his ful-"ness have we all received;" and, as it is said of Mary's box of spikenard in the Gospel, "the house "is filled with the odour of the ointment." Nor did the dew of heaven, in time of drought, ever prove more refreshing and beneficial to the mountains of Judah, than are the influences of grace, when descending in soft silence from above upon the church; in the union and communion of which, God hath "commanded the blessing, even life for ever-"more." O come the day, when division shall cease, and enmity be done away; when the tribes of the spiritual Israel shall be united in a bond of eternal charity, under the true David, in the Jerusalem which is above; and saints and angels shall sing this lovely Psalm together!

PSALM CXXXIV.

ARGUMENT.

With this Psalm, Christians in the church, like the Levites of old in the temple, 1, 2. call upon each other to bless God, and 3. upon God to bless them all.

1. *Behold, bless ye the* LORD, *all* ye *servants of the* LORD, *which by night stand in the house of the* LORD. 2. *Lift up your hands* in *the sanctuary, and bless the* LORD.

The first word in this verse, "Behold," seemeth to point at the reasons which the priests in the temple

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had to bless Jehovah; as if it had been said, Behold, the house of God is built, the holy services are appointed, and the Lord hath given you rest from your enemies, that you may serve him acceptably; set about it, therefore, with gratitude and alacrity. We read, 1 Chron. ix. 33. that the Levitical singers were "employed in their work day and night;" to the end, doubtless, that the earthly sanctuary might bear some resemblance of that above, where, St. John tells us, the redeemed "are before the throne of God, and "serve him day and night in his temple:" Rev. vii. 15. Christians are the redeemed of the Lord, redeemed from the guilt and dominion of sin, delivered out of the hands of their enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, that they may become the servants of Christ. He hath built his church, and in it he wills that men pray, lifting up holy hands, and that they offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving. "Be-"hold," therefore, "bless the Lord Jesus, all ye "servants of his;" bless him in the cheerful and busy hours of day; bless him in the solemn and peaceful watches of the night; making melody, even then, in your hearts at least, if not with your voices. The pious Mr. Nicholas Farrer exhibited, in the last century, an instance of a Protestant family, in which a constant course of psalmody was appointed, and so strictly kept up, that through the whole four and twenty hours of day and night, there was no portion of time, when some of the members were not employed in performing that most pleasant part of duty and devotion. The reader may see the curious life of this extraordinary person, as drawn up by Dr.

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Turner, bishop of Ely, in the Christian Magazine, vol. ii. p. 356.

3. *The* LORD *that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.*

The two preceding verses, as Mr. Mudge observes, seem directed to the priests of the temple, by some person, probably of consequence, come up to pay his devotion. This third verse is therefore returned, as from the priests. And thus it is, that prayer and praise, which by grace are caused to ascend from our hearts to God, will certainly return in the benedictions of heaven upon our souls and bodies, our persons and our families, our church and our country; like the vapours, which, exhaled by the warmth of the sun from the bowels of the earth, mount upwards into the air, but soon fall again in fruitful showers, causing the little hills to rejoice, and the valleys to laugh and sing.

PSALM CXXXV.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, 1, 2. the servants of Jehovah are exhorted to praise him, 3. on account of his goodness; of the pleasure to be found in the employment; 4. of the peculiar mercies shown to Israel; 5. of his infinite superiority over the gods of the nations, manifested, 6, 7. in the works of creation, 8—14. in his dealings with the church, and with her adversaries. 15—18. The folly of idolatry,

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and of those who practise it, is described; and 19—21. Israel is again stirred up to praise Jehovah.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. *Praise ye the name of the* LORD; *praise* him, *O ye servants of the* LORD. 2. *Ye that stand in the house of the* LORD, *in the courts of the house of our God.* 3. *Praise the* LORD; *for the* LORD is *good: sing praises unto his name; for* it is *pleasant.*

All the servants of God, they, more especially, who minister in the temple, are repeatedly, as in the foregoing Psalm, excited to praise their blessed Master. Two reasons are assigned why they should do this. First, the goodness of that Master, and secondly, the pleasantness of the employment. The latter of these reasons hath a natural and necessary dependence on the former. A sense of the divine mercy will tune our hearts and voices to praise. We, who are upon earth, often find ourselves indisposed for the duty of thanksgiving, because the concerns of the body, the cares and pleasures of life, extinguish for a time, this sense in us, until grace, prayer, and meditation, render it again lively and active. In the inhabitants of heaven, who behold God without the veil of matter interposed, it is always so; and therefore, they rest not day or night from singing hallelujahs, nor cease one moment to rejoice in God their Saviour.

4. *For the* LORD *hath chosen Jacob unto himself,* and *Israel for his peculiar treasure.* 5. *For I know*

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that the LORD *is great, and* that *our Lord is above all gods.*

A third reason why the children of Israel should praise the name of Jehovah, was the circumstance of their having been selected from among the nations to be his church, to receive the law and the promises, to have his presence residing in the midst of them, and to be the guardians of the true faith and worship. And a fourth reason, was the superiority of Jehovah their God over the gods of the heathen, and consequently over those who worshipped them; from whence followed this comfortable inference, that he was able to protect and to defend his people against every enemy that had evil will to Zion. Shall not we Christians, then, praise the same gracious Lord, who hath chosen us out of the world, who hath given unto us his Gospel, who dwelleth in us by his Spirit, and who, by that Spirit, maketh us more than conquerors over our spiritual adversaries?

6. *Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased,* that *did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*

The pre-eminence of Jehovah above the gods of the nations is evinced by this consideration, that he, at the beginning, created and formed those powers of nature, whose operations in the heavens, the earth, and the waters, led the heathen world, after it had lost the knowledge of the Creator, to adore the creature as independent. Let us praise him, who, in the intellectual as in the material world, is Lord and King; who is obeyed by the angels in heaven, served by the church upon earth, and feared by the spirits imprisoned in deep places beneath.

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7. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.

They who in old time paid their devotions to the elements, imagined those elements to be capable of giving or withholding rain at pleasure. Therefore we find the prophet Jeremiah reclaiming that power to Jehovah, as the God who made and governed the world: "Are there any among the vanities of the "Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens "give showers? Art thou not he, O Jehovah our "God? Therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou "hast made all these things:" Jer. xiv. 22. Among the Greeks and Romans we meet with a Jupiter possessed of the thunder and the lightning, and an Æolus ruling over the winds. The Psalmist teacheth us to restore the celestial artillery to its rightful owner. Jehovah, the God of Israel, and the Creator of the universe, contrived the wonderful machinery of light and air, by which vapours are raised from the earth, compacted into clouds, and distilled in rain. At his command the winds are suddenly in motion, and as suddenly at rest again; we hear the sound, but cannot tell whence they come, or whither they go; as if they were taken from secret storehouses of the Almighty, and then laid up till their service was required again. The same idea God himself is pleased to give us in the book of Job, where he describeth the instruments of his power, as so many weapons of war in the arsenal of a mighty prince: "Hast "thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or "hast thou seen the treasures of the hail which I

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"have reserved against the time of trouble, against "the day of battle and war? By what way is the "light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon "the earth? Who hath divided a watercourse for "the overflowing of waters? or a way for the light-"ning of thunder, to cause it to rain on the earth?" Job xxxviii. 22, &c. It is a great instance of the divine wisdom and goodness, that lightning should be accompanied by rain, to soften its rage, and prevent its mischievous effects. Thus, in the midst of judgement, does God remember mercy. The threatenings in his word against sinners are like lightning; they would blast and scorch us up, were it not for his promises made in the same word to penitents, which, as a gracious rain, turn aside their fury, refreshing and comforting our affrighted spirits.

8. *Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast.* 9. Who *sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.*

Egypt was the theatre of the grand contest between the God of Israel and the gods of the heathen. The superiority of the former over the latter was shown in every possible way by the miracles of Moses, which demonstrated all the powers of nature to be under the dominion of Jehovah, and to act at his command; so that, instead of being able to protect, they were made to torment and destroy their deluded votaries. See more on Psalm lxxviii. 44, &c. The objects of a man's sin frequently become, in the end, the instruments of his punishment.

10. *Who smote great nations, and slew mighty*

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kings; 11. *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:* 12. *And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.*

The victories gained by Israel over Sihon and Og, in their passage to Canaan, and afterwards over the idolatrous kings of that country, are more proofs of the same point. For Israel therefore conquered, because Jehovah fought for them, and put them in possession of that good land, when the iniquity of its old inhabitants was full, and cried to heaven for vengeance. The enemies we have to encounter in our way to the promised inheritance, will also, if vigorously opposed, fall before us. "The kingdom of "heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it "by force." But it is God who fighteth for us, and with us, who giveth us the victory, and putteth us in possession, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

13. *Thy name, O* LORD, endureth *for ever; and thy memorial, O* LORD, *throughout all generations.* 14. *For the* LORD *will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.*

By the destruction of Pharaoh, with his Egyptians, and by the battles and victories of Joshua; much more, by the overthrow of the spiritual Pharaoh, with his infernal host, and by the battles and victories of the true Joshua; Jehovah hath gotten him glory, and his name is magnified in the church from age to age. The people whom he hath redeemed, may, indeed, for the chastisement of their iniquities, be sometimes delivered into the hands of their enemies, and oppressed by them. But it is only to show

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them their transgressions, and lead them to repentance. When this effect is wrought, he is always ready to "judge them," to plead and avenge their cause; he "repenteth him" of the evil, and averteth it; he is entreated for the land, and becometh gracious to his servants.

15. *The idols of the heathen* are *silver and gold, the work of men's hands.* 16. *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not.* 17. *They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there* any *breath in their mouths.* 18. *They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.*

In these verses is set forth the difference between the God of Israel, and the idols of the nations, as also between the worshippers of each; all tending to confirm the truth of what was asserted, ver. 5. "I "know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD "is above all gods." As the same words occur, Psalm cxv. 4, &c. the reader is referred thither for the explication of them.

19. *Bless the* LORD, *O house of Israel: bless the* LORD, *O house of Aaron:* 20. *Bless the* LORD, *O house of Levi: ye that fear the* LORD, *bless the* LORD. 21. *Blessed be the* LORD *out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the* LORD.

He who proved himself superior to the objects of ancient idolatry, is no less superior to every object on which deluded man can place his affections. The Lord gave, and the Lord will take them away. Let "the house of Israel," therefore, and "the sons of "Aaron," the church and the ministers thereof, let

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all who "fear the Lord," bless and praise his holy name in the temple here below, until they shall be admitted to do it for evermore, in that which is above.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXVI.

ARGUMENT.

This is a delightful hymn of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah, 1—3. God of gods and Lord of lords, for the wonders, 4—9. of creation, 10—26. of providence and grace; which were probably celebrated in due order by one half of the choir, while the other half, or perhaps the whole in full chorus, took up the burden of each verse, "For his mercy endureth for ever!" a form of acknowledgement, as bishop Patrick observes, prescribed by David, 1 Chron. xvi. 41. to be used continually in the divine service; a form highly proper for creatures, and sinful creatures, to use, whose great employment it is now, and will be for ever, to magnify the mercy and loving kindness of their God.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD; *for* he is *good: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 2. *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy* endureth *for*

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ever. 3. *O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

We are called upon to praise Jehovah, first, for his own essential attributes; then, for the exertion of those attributes in his works. The attributes here mentioned are those of "goodness" and "power;" the one renders him willing, the other able, to save; and what can we desire more, but that he should continue to be so? Of this likewise we are assured, by contemplating the unchangeableness of his nature. His disposition altereth not, and his kingdom none can take from him: "his mercy endureth for ever."

4. *To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

All the works of God are "wonderful" and speak him "alone" to have been their author. The established course of the world is, in reality, no less admirable, than are those extraordinary interpositions of omnipotence, whereby it hath been sometimes interrupted and suspended; though the latter, on account of their novelty, are apt to affect us more than the former doth, which is ever before our eyes, and therefore less regarded by us. How many of those, for whom the wonders of creation, providence, and redemption have been wrought, think none of them worthy their attention! Angels admire and adore, where man will not deign to cast an eye, or employ a thought.

5. *To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 6. *To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

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The heavens above, and the earth beneath, declare the wisdom of their great Maker, and proclaim aloud, to an intelligent ear, the divinity of the hand that formed them. The heavens display the love of God to man; the earth teaches the duty of man to God. Heaven is glorious and gracious, earth verdant and fruitful. The bright and ample circumference of heaven, the variegated surface of the earth, and the profusion of good things that distinguish the seasons, contaminated as they all have been by man's transgression, even now yield a prospect which annihilates all human grandeur. What idea, then, are we to frame of those new heavens and earth, from which sin and corruption are excluded, and where righteousness hath fixed her eternal throne?

7. *To him that made great lights: for his mercy* endureth *for ever:* 8. *The sun to rule by day: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 9. *The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

Light is the life and soul of the universe, the noblest emblem of the power and glory of God, who in the night season leaves not himself without witness, but gives us some portion of that light reflected, which by day we behold flowing from its great foundation in the heart of heaven. Thy church and thy saints, O Lord, "are the moon and the stars," which by the communication of doctrine, and the splendour of example, guide our feet, while we travel on in the night that hath overtaken us, waiting for the dawn of everlasting day. Then we shall behold thy glory, and see thee as thou art.

10. *To him that smote Egypt in their first-born;*

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for his mercy endureth *for ever*: 11. *And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 12. *With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 13. *To him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 14. *And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 15. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 16. *To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 17. *To him which smote great kings: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 18. *And slew famous kings: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 19. *Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 20. *And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 21. *And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 22. Even *an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 23. *Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*. 24. *And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy* endureth *for ever*.

From the works of creation, the Psalmist proceeds to those of providence and grace. He celebrates that mercy which rescued Israel from oppression, brought them out of the house of bondage, divided the sea to make a way for them, supported and conducted them through a waste, howling wilderness, crushed the might and power of those who opposed them, and at length settled them in the inheritance promised to their fathers. Eternal mercy hath in

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Christ Jesus realized all these figures, and accomplished the great redemption, thus foreshadowed of old. The Israel of God hath been rescued from the oppression of Satan, and brought out of the house of spiritual bondage. In the waters of baptism the old man of sin is buried, and we arise triumphant, to sing the praises of God our Saviour, who from thenceforth supports and conducts us in our passage through the world, strengthening us in the day of battle against every enemy that opposeth us, until we enter the heavenly Canaan, promised to the fathers of our faith, and dwell for ever in the possession of peace. When we consider how God has thus "remember-"ed us in our low estate," and thus "redeemed us "from our enemies," can we be weary of repeating, "For his mercy endureth for ever?"

25. *Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* 26. *O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.*

The same bounty, which, in the natural world, provided proper nutriment for every creature, hath also provided for the spirits of all flesh the bread of eternal life. In either sense, Jehovah "openeth his "hand, and filleth all things living with plenteous-"ness." Be, therefore, his praise as universal and lasting as his mercy!

PSALM CXXXVII.

ARGUMENT.

The Israelites, captives in Babylon, 1, 2. describe their woful estate; and, 3, 4. the insults of their

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masters. 5, 6. They declare their inviolable affection for Jerusalem: 7. pray that God would remember the behaviour of Edom; and, 8, 9. predict the destruction of Babylon. This Psalm admits of a beautiful and useful application to the state of Christians in this world, and their expected deliverance out of it.

1. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*

What an inexpressible pathos is there in these few words! How do they at once transport us to Babylon, and place before our eyes the mournful situation of the Israelitish captives! Driven from their native country, stripped of every comfort and convenience, in a strange land, among idolaters, wearied and broken-hearted, they sit in silence by those hostile waters. Then the pleasant banks of Jordan present themselves to their imaginations; the towers of Salem rise to view; and the sad remembrance of much-loved Zion causes tears to run down their cheeks; "By the waters of Babylon we sat down, yea, we "wept, when we remembered Zion!" Besides the use which may be made of this Psalm by any church, when, literally, in a state of captivity, there is a sense in which it may be used by us all. For Zion is, in Scripture, the standing type of heaven, as Babylon is the grand figure of the world, the seat of confusion, the oppressor and persecutor of the people of God. In these, or the like terms, we may,

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therefore, suppose a sinner to bemoan himself upon the earth—O Lord, I am an Israelite, exiled by my sins from thy holy city, and left to mourn in this Babylon, the land of my captivity. Here I dwell in sorrow, by these transient waters, musing on the restless and unstable nature of earthly pleasures, which pass swiftly by me, and are soon gone for ever. Yet for these, alas! I have exchanged the permanent joys of Zion, and parted with the felicity of thy chosen. Wherefore my heart is pained within me, and the remembrance of my folly will not let me rest night or day. O Zion, thou holy and beautiful city, the temple of the Lamb, the habitation of the blessed, the seat of delight, the land of the living, when shall I behold thee? When shall I enter thy gates with thanksgiving, and thy courts with praise? The hope of a return to thee is my only comfort in this vale of tears, where I am and will be a mourner, till my captivity be brought back, and my sorrow be turned into joy.

2. *We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

The additional circumstance, which the divine painter hath here thrown into his piece, is, to the last degree, just and striking. It was not enough to represent the Hebrew captives weeping, on the banks of the Euphrates, at the remembrance of Zion, but, upon looking up, we behold their harps unstrung, and pendent on the willows that grew there. The sincere penitent, like them, hath bidden adieu to mirth; his soul refuseth to be comforted with the

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comforts of Babylon; nor can he sing any more, till pardon and restoration shall have enabled him to sing, in the temple, a song of praise and thanksgiving.

3. *For there they that carried us away captives required of us a song; and they that wasted us* required of us *mirth*, saying, *Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* 4. *How shall we sing the* LORD'S *song in a strange land*?*

The Babylonians are introduced as insulting over the Israelites, and scoffing at their faith and worship, not without a tacit reflection on their God, who could not protect his favoured people against their enemies. "Now sing us one of your songs of Zion; now let "us hear you sound the praises of that God, of "whom ye boasted, that he dwelt among you in the "temple which we have laid waste, and burnt with "fire." Thus the faithful have been, and thus they will be, insulted by infidels in the day of their calamity. And "how," indeed, "can they sing the "Lord's song in a strange land?" How can they tune their voices to festive and eucharistic strains, when God, by punishing them for their sins, calleth to mourning and weeping? But thus, Israel in Babylon foresaw a day of redemption; and so doth the church in the world; a day when she shall triumph, and her enemies shall lick the dust. No cir-

* Many singers were carried captives: Ezra ii. 41. These would of course take their instruments with them, and be insulted, as here. Their songs were sacred, and unfit to be sung before idolaters. But the words, "How shall we sing," &c. are not an answer given to them, but the free utterance afterwards of the feelings of the Jews among themselves. ANONYMOUS NOTES IN MERRICK'S ANNOTATIONS.

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cumstances, therefore, should make us forget her, and the promises concerning her.

5. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget* her cunning. 6. *If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

The whole nation may be supposed in these words to declare, as one man, that neither the afflictions nor the allurements of Babylon should efface from their minds the remembrance of Jerusalem, or prevent their looking forward to her future glorious restoration. If any temptation should induce them to employ their tongues and their hands in the service of Babel rather than in that of Zion, they wish to lose the use of the former and skill of the latter. The thoughts and affections of true penitents, both in prosperity and adversity, are fixed upon their heavenly country and city; they had rather be deprived of their powers and faculties, than of the will to use them aright; and the hope of glory, hereafter to be revealed in the church, is the flower and crown of their joy.

7. *Remember, O* LORD, *the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze* it, *raze* it, even *to the foundation thereof.*

The people of God beseech him to take their cause in hand, and to avenge them on their adversaries, particularly on the Edomites, who, though their brethren according to the flesh, being descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob, yet in the day of Jerusalem's affliction, when the Chaldeans came against it, were aiding and encouraging those pagans to destroy

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it utterly. Edom is charged with this unnatural behaviour, and threatened for it, by God himself, in the prophecy of Obadiah, ver. 10. &c. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger: neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction—For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee, thy reward shall return upon thine own head—but upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness, and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." It may be observed, that the Jews afterwards acted the same part toward the Christian church, which the Edomites had acted toward them, encouraging and stirring up the Gentiles to persecute and destroy it from off the face of the earth. And God "remembered" them for the Christians' sakes, as they prayed him to remember "Edom" for their sakes. Learn we hence, what a crime it is, for Christians to assist the common enemy, or call in the common enemy to assist them, against their brethren.

8. *O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy* shall he be, *that rewardeth thee, as thou*

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hast served us. 9. *Happy* shall he be, *that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*

The subject of these two verses is the same with that of many chapters in Isaiah and Jeremiah, namely, the vengeance of heaven executed upon Babylon by Cyrus, raised up to be king of the Medes and Persians, united under him for that purpose. The meaning of the words, "happy shall he be," is, He shall go on and prosper, for the Lord of hosts shall go with him, and fight his battles against the enemy and oppressor of his people, empowering him to recompense upon the Chaldeans the works of their hands, and to reward them as they served Israel. The slaughter of the very infants, mentioned in the last verse, is expressly predicted by Isaiah, ch. xiii. 16. "Their children also shall be dashed to pieces "before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, "and their wives ravished." The destruction was to be universal, sparing neither sex nor age. Terrible, but just, are thy judgements, O Lord! The fall of the mystical "Babylon" is described, Rev. xviii. in terms and phrases, borrowed from this and other prophecies, relating, primarily, to the ancient city called by that name. Whoever will carefully read over the chapter referred to, with the three subsequent ones concerning the triumph of Messiah, and the glory of the new Jerusalem, will be able to form proper ideas of the world and the church, and will know where to choose his portion.

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PSALM CXXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth, 1—3. a resolution to praise God for a deliverance vouchsafed; 4, 5. a prophecy that the kings of the earth should glorify Jehovah for his mercy, shown, 6. in exalting the humble, and abasing the proud; 7, 8. an act of faith and confidence in God.

1. *I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.* 2. *I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name, for thy loving kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;* or, *thou hast magnified thy name,* even *thy word, above all.*

In these verses we evidently hear the voice of one whom God had delivered from a state of great affliction and danger, and who therefore determines to make the due acknowledgements in public; to give thanks "before the gods," that is, before "kings" and "rulers" in the great congregation; to "wor-"ship in the temple," and there to set forth the "loving kindness" and "truth" of Jehovah, in having accomplished the promised salvation, and thereby "magnified" his holy "name" and his faithful "word" over every thing that opposeth itself against it. The Christian church cannot find stronger and more emphatical terms, in which to express her sense of the greatest of all mercies, the redemption

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of the world by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and his exaltation "above every name that is "named in heaven and earth."

3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me,* and *strengthenedst me* with *strength in my soul.* 4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O* LORD, *when they hear the words of thy mouth.* 5. *Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the* LORD: *for great is the glory of the* LORD.

From this part of the Psalm it appears to be a prophetical one. The deliverance which it celebrates is of such a nature, that, when the glad tidings of it should be published to the world, we are told, it should induce the nations, with their princes, to adore Jehovah, to walk in his ways, and to chant forth his praises. The call of the Gentiles to the Gospel is here foretold in words which cannot be mistaken; and the redemption of the church, in Christ her head, is spoken of as the subject of thanksgiving among the kings of the earth. "In the day "when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." For this reason, "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, "O Lord," &c.

6. *Though the* LORD be *high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

Humility is the way to salvation and glory. It is said of our blessed Lord, that "because he humbled "himself, therefore God highly exalted him:" and the great potentates of the world must tread in his steps, if they would be exalted with him. As to the

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proud, God "knoweth" and he detesteth them; he beholdeth and keepeth them at a "distance."

7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.*

Who doth not "walk in the midst of trouble," while his pilgrimage is prolonged upon the earth? Who hath not "enemies" encompassing him on every side? O how comfortable, then, the reflection that he is with us, who can "revive" the dead; that we are under the protection of an "arm" which is almighty! Yes, blessed Lord, we believe that this saying of thy holy Psalmist will be verified to every child of thine, even as it was to him, and to thy Son Jesus, in whose person he might speak it, as a prophet. Great indeed were the "troubles," in the midst of which the true David "walked" up and down amongst us. He carried all our sorrows, because he bare all our sins. "Yet didst thou revive "him;" thou didst raise him from the dead, and exalt him to thy throne in heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us, that we, who, in the days of our flesh, do also "walk in the midst of "trouble," may be revived by thy Spirit, the giver of life and holiness.

8. *The* LORD *will perfect* that which *concerneth me: thy mercy, O* LORD, endureth *for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

In troublous times, and the days of affliction, we must look back on that which God hath already done for us, and from thence draw an argument, that he

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will "perfect" that which remains, and not leave his work unfinished: we must remember, that his mercies fail not after a time, but "endure for ever" the same; and when we call to mind that we are "the work of his own hands," how can we think he will "forsake us" unless we utterly and finally forsake him?

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXIX.

ARGUMENT.

It seems evident, from the latter part of this noble and instructive Psalm, that the author penned it at a time when he was persecuted and calumniated, as an appeal to the all-seeing Judge between him and his adversaries. He takes the opportunity of expatiating in the sublimest manner, 1—12. on the omnipresence and omniscience of him who, 13—16. formeth man in the womb by his power, and, 17, 18. preserveth him through life by his providence. He then, 19, 20. expresseth his confidence that God, as knowing all things, would deliver him from his enemies; 21, 22. he declareth his zeal and fidelity in the service of his divine Master, by whom, 23, 24. he petitioneth to be proved, purified, and perfected in the way of holiness.

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1. *O* LORD, *thou hast searched me and known* me. 2. *Thou knowest my down sitting and my up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.* 3. *Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted* with *all my ways.* 4. *For* there is *not a word in my tongue,* but, *lo, O* LORD, *thou knowest it altogether,* or, *When there is not a word in my tongue, lo, O* LORD, *&c.* 5. *Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.* 6. Such *knowledge* is *too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot* attain *unto it.*

The Psalmist employeth a beautiful variety of expressions to denote his faith in the omnipresence and omniscience of Jehovah, to whom, in the latter part of the Psalm, he appealeth, as the proper judge between him and his implacable enemies. He describeth his God as having that complete knowledge of him and his affairs, which, among men, the most accurate "search" and the strictest scrutiny could not obtain; as being thoroughly "acquainted with "all his ways" or proceedings, nay, with his very "thoughts," while yet existing only in embryo, in his own mind; as watching and observing him at all seasons, during the actions of the day, and his repose at night; and, in short, as having so "beset" him on all sides, and "laid his hand upon him," that he could not move without his knowledge and consent. When we reflect that "all things are thus naked and "open to him with whom we have to do;" that although he dwelleth in the highest heavens, he surveyeth not only the outward acts, but the very hearts and imaginations, of men upon earth—must we not

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each of us cry out, "Such knowledge is too won-"derful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;" I cannot admire it enough, for I cannot conceive of it aright!—"The actual, constant consideration of "God's presence would be the readiest way in the "world to make sin to cease from among the children "of men, and for men to approach to the blessed "estate of the saints in heaven, who cannot sin, "for they always walk in the presence, and behold "the face, of God." See bishop Taylor's "Holy "Living," chap. i. sect. 3.

7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* 8. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou* art *there: if I make my bed in hell,* or, *the grave, behold thou* art there. 9. If *I take the wings of the morning,* and *dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;* 10. *Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* 11. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* 12. *Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light* are *both alike to* thee.

We can never sin with security, but in a place where the eye of God cannot behold us. And where is that place? Had we a mind to escape his inspection, "whither should we go?" Heaven is the seat of his glory, creation the scene of his providence, and the grave itself will be the theatre of his power; so that our efforts will be equally vain, whether we ascend, or descend, or fly abroad upon the wings of the morning light, which diffuseth itself with such

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velocity over the globe from east to west. The arm of the Almighty will still at pleasure prevent, and be ready to arrest, the fugitives in their progress. Darkness may, indeed, conceal us and our deeds from the sight of men; but the divine presence, like that of the sun, turns night into day, and makes all things manifest before God. The same consideration which should restrain us from sin, should also encourage us to work righteousness, and comfort us under all our sorrows; namely, the thought, that we are never out of the sight and protection of our Maker. The piety and the charity which are practised in cottages; the labour and the pain which are patiently endured in the field, and on the bed of sickness; the misery and torment inflicted by persecution in the mines, the galleys, and the dungeons: all are under the inspection of Jehovah, and are noted down by him against the day of recompense. He sees, and he will reward, all we do, and all we suffer, as becometh Christians. He who, for our sakes, caused his Son to descend from heaven to the lower parts of the earth, and from thence to ascend to heaven again, will watch over, preserve, and re-assemble, the parts of our bodies, though dissolved in the grave, buried in the ocean, or dispersed to the four winds. So that, with allusion to this event also, a dying servant of God may exclaim, Whither can I go from thy Spirit? or whither can I flee from thy presence? If, as to my spiritual part, I ascend into heaven, thou art there to receive me; if, as touching my body, I make my bed in שאול, or the grave, behold thou art there, to secure me. If I take the wings of the wind, or

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those yet more expeditious ones of the morning, and am carried by them to dwell in the midst of the sea, instead of the bowels of the earth, still shall I be under thy power and providence; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me fast, preserving me for a joyful resurrection at the time appointed.

13. *For thou hast possessed,* or, *formed, my reins; thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.* 14. *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully* and *wonderfully made: marvellous* are *thy works; and* that *my soul knoweth right well.*

That God seeth in darkness, and that from him nothing is hidden, his knowledge of, and power over, our most inward parts, do plainly show. He "formed," and he therefore "possesseth," as his own property, our "reins," and is consequently privy to all those affections and desires which flow from thence. It was he who "covered us" in the womb, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, Job x. 11. who "clothed us with skin and flesh, and fenced us with "bones and sinews;" a work so astonishing, that before the Psalmist proceeds in his description of it, he cannot help breaking forth in rapture at the thought: "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and "wonderfully made!"

> "Obstupeo, et memet lætâ formidine lustro,
> "Divini monumentum operis!"—— LOWTH.
>
> With awful joy I view this frame of mine,
> Stupendous monument of pow'r divine!

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15. *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret,* and *curiously wrought,* or, *variegated like needle-work, in the lowest parts of the earth.* 16. *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all* my members *were written,* which *in continuance were fashioned, when* as yet there *was none of them.*

By the "lower parts of the earth" is undoubtedly to be understood the "womb," where the fetus is gradually formed and matured for the birth, like plants and flowers under ground. The process is compared to that in a piece of work wrought with a needle, or fashioned in the loom; which, with all its beautiful variety of colour, and proportion of figure, ariseth by degrees to perfection under the hand of the artist, framed according to a pattern lying before him, from a rude mass of silk, or other materials. Thus, by the wisdom and power of God, and after a plan delineated in his book, is a shapeless mass wrought up into the most curious texture of nerves, veins, arteries, bones, muscles, membranes, and skin, most skilfully interwoven and connected with each other, until it becometh a body, harmoniously diversified with all the limbs and lineaments of a man, not one of which at first appeared, any more than the figures were to be seen in the ball of silk. But then (which is the chief thing here insisted on by the Psalmist), whereas the human artificer must have the clearest light whereby to accomplish his task, the divine Work-master seeth in secret, and effecteth all his wonders within the dark and narrow confines of the womb. The reformation of our corrupted and dis-

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solved bodies, which is to be wrought, at the last day, in the womb of the earth, in order to their new birth, will crown all the works of the Almighty.

17. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto*, or *concerning, me, O God! how great is the sum of them!* 18. If *I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.*

From the wonders of God's forming hand, the Psalmist proceeds to those of his all-directing providence, which afford additional proofs of the divine omniscience and omnipresence. The "thoughts" and counsels of Jehovah concerning David, his appointment to the throne, his troubles and his preservation in the midst of them, were "precious" and delightful subjects of meditation and praise, never to be exhausted of the rich matter they contained. With these in his mind, he lay down at night to rest, and "when he awoke" in the morning, his thoughts naturally recurred to the pleasing theme; he began where he had left off, and found himself, in heart and soul, "still present with God," still ruminating on him and his works. The mercies of heaven in the redemption of the church, by the sufferings and exaltation of the true David, according to the divine decree concerning him—how precious are they to believers! How great is the sum, how far exceeding all human arithmetic to number them! Let them be to us the constant subjects of contemplation, admiration, and thanksgiving, day and night; and let death, that last sleep, find us engaged in an employment, which, when we awake and arise from the grave, we

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shall resume, and prosecute to eternity in the presence of God.

19. *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:* or, *Wilt thou not slay the wicked, O God? depart from me, therefore, ye blood-thirsty men.* 20. *For they speak against thee wickedly,* and *thine enemies take* thy name *in vain.*

David now draws the intended conclusion from the premises, so largely expatiated upon in the former part of the Psalm. As if he had said—And wilt thou not, O God, thou who art every where present, seeing and knowing all things: thou to whom the justice of my cause, and the iniquity of mine adversaries, are equally open; thou who hast formed, and hitherto, in so wonderful a manner, watched over and preserved thy servant; "wilt thou not slay the "wicked," and deliver me, as thou hast promised to do, out of their hands? I know thou wilt; "depart "from me, therefore, ye blood-thirsty men;" I trust in my God, and will have no connexion, in the way of treaty or friendship, with you. You are not my enemies, but those of Jehovah; against whom, not considering that he is privy to all your words, and even to your thoughts, you "speak" presumptuously and "wickedly," and whose "name" you "take "in vain," no less when you do evil under a godly pretence, and call him to witness the truth of your lies and calumnies, than when you openly blaspheme him. Such seemeth to be the full import of these two verses; and their application to the members of the church, when at any time in similar circumstances, is obvious.

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21. *Do not I hate them, O* LORD, *that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22. I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.*

A faithful servant hath the same interests, the same friends, the same enemies, with his Master, whose cause and honour he is, upon all occasions, in duty bound to support and maintain. A good man hates, as God himself doth; he hates not the persons of men, but their sins; not what God made them, but what they have made themselves. We are neither to hate the men, on account of the vices they practise; nor to love the vices, for the sake of the men who practise them. He who observeth invariably this distinction, fulfilleth the perfect law of charity, and hath the love of God and of his neighbour abiding in him.

23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24. And see if* there be any *wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

In the first verse of the Psalm, David declared, that Jehovah had "searched him out, and known "him:" he concludes with a petition, that his proceedings, and even his thoughts, might be still scrutinized by his Maker, in order to their perfect purification from any evil which might be in them, or adhere to them. Should the hottest furnace of adversity be found necessary to purge the dross from the silver, he refuseth not to be dissolved in it, and new-formed, so that he might only become a vessel of honour fitted for the Master's use here below, and

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vouchsafed a place afterwards in his temple above. "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me "in the way everlasting!"

PSALM CXL.

ARGUMENT.

This Psalm containeth, 1—8. a prayer for deliverance from persecutors and calumniators, their violence and their wiles; 9—11. a prophecy of their final destruction, and, 12, 13. the salvation of the afflicted righteous. It was composed by David in his troubles, and is applicable to Christ and to the church, respectively, in theirs.

1. *Deliver me, O* LORD, *from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man: 2. Which imagine mischiefs in* their *heart; continually are they gathered together* for *war.*

"Evil and violent men" exist in all ages, to harass and oppress the servants of God; their thoughts are employed in "imagining mischief" against such, and their hands are ready at all times for the "war." Had we no enemies without, there are those within, who are ever fighting and troubling us. We cannot put off our Christian armour for a moment in this world; nor enter into peace and rest, but by a happy death and a joyful resurrection. Then God will "deliver" us, as he delivered David, and our blessed Lord and Master, the Son of David, from their respective enemies.

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3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent: adders' poison is under their lips.

Slander and calumny must always precede and accompany persecution, because malice itself cannot excite people against a good man, as such; to do this, he must first be represented as a bad man. What can be said of those who are busied in this manner, but that they are a "generation of vipers," the brood of the old "serpent," that grand accuser and calumniator of the brethren, having under their tongues a bag of "poison" conveying instant death to the reputation on which they fasten? Thus David was hunted as a rebel, Christ was crucified as a blasphemer, and the primitive Christians were tortured as guilty of incest and murder.

4. Keep me, O LORD, *from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent men, who have purposed to overthrow my goings. 5. The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the way-side; they have set gins for me.*

David here describeth the subtilty and industry employed by his enemies to effect his destruction, by lying in wait for him, as a skilful fowler doth for his game, so that they thought it impossible he should escape their hands. Such was the conduct of the Jews, with regard to the Son of David. And, O how refined the policy, how unwearied the application of our spiritual adversaries, to "overthrow our goings" in the path of life and salvation, to circumvent, and to destroy us for ever! How are "the snares, the "nets, and the gins," placed for us, by that cunning

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and experienced artist, who takes care that nothing should appear in view, but the allaring baits of honour, pleasure, and profit, while of the toils we have no notice, till we find ourselves entangled and caught in them! Who shall preserve us thus walking in the midst of dangers? He to whom David, in the following verses, preferreth his prayer, and teacheth us to do likewise.

6. *I said unto the* LORD: *Thou* art *my God: hear the voice of my supplications,* O LORD. 7. *O God the* LORD, *the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.* 8. *Grant not,* O LORD, *the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device;* lest *they exalt themselves.*

Jehovah, the God of David, is also our God, and he is always ready to hear our supplications. He is our strength, and hath often covered our head with the helmit of salvation, in the day of battle and open war with our spiritual enemies. Nor will he, for the glory of his name, grant their desires, or permit their more secret "devices" and machinations to work the destruction of his people; lest they exalt themselves as having frustrated his counsels for the redemption of his servants.

9. As for *the head of those that compass me about, the mischief of their own lips shall cover them.* 10. *Burning coals shall fall upon them; they shall be cast into the fire, into deep pits, that they rise not up again.* 11. *An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth; evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow* him.

The Prophet, in these three verses, predicteth those

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just judgements which heaven will inflict on the slanderers and persecutors of the righteous. Their lips, which uttered mischief against others, shall be the means of covering themselves with confusion, when out of their own mouths they shall be judged. Those tongues, which have contributed to set the world on fire, shall be tormented with the hot burning coals of eternal vengeance: and they who, with so much eagerness and diligence, have prepared pits for the destruction of their brethren, shall be cast into a deep and bottomless pit, out of which they will not rise up again any more for ever. Evil speakers and false accusers shall gain no lasting establishment, but punishment shall hunt sin through all its doubles, and seize it at last as its legal prey. Let these great truths be firmly rooted in our hearts, and they will keep us steady in the worst of times.

12. *I know that the* LORD *will maintain the cause of the afflicted,* and *the right of the poor.* 13. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.*

That unjust and oppressive men shall, in the end, suffer proportionably to their deserts, we are assured from this consideration, namely, that the Almighty is the patron of the injured and oppressed. He will plead the cause of the meek and lowly, who are used by the world as their blessed Master was used before them. A day will come, when, delivered out of all their troubles, they shall "give thanks unto thy "name," O Lord, and "dwell in thy presence" for evermore.

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PSALM CXLI.

ARGUMENT.

David seems to have composed this Psalm just before his flight to Achish king of Gath; when he had a second time spared Saul's life, but could trust him no longer: see 1 Sam. xxvi. and xxvii. 1, 2. He prayeth earnestly for help, and entreateth to be heard, as when able to attend the service of the tabernacle; 3—5. he petitioneth to be preserved from the snares of idolatry, in the country whither he was going; 6, 7. he relateth his own conduct toward Saul, and that of Saul toward him; 8, 9. he professeth his faith in Jehovah, and redoubleth his prayer to him; 10. he predicteth the destruction of his enemies, and his own deliverance. Many parts of the exposition of this Psalm, given by the late learned Mr. Peters, in his "Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job," have been adopted in the ensuing comment.

1. LORD, *I will cry unto thee, make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.* 2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee* as *incense;* and *the lifting up of my hands* as *the evening sacrifice.*

The earnest and repeated supplication for help, in the first of these two verses, sufficiently declares the Psalmist to have been, at the time, in a situation of

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the utmost distress. And the second verse as plainly showeth, that he was then at a distance from the tabernacle, where all the solemn prayers of the Israelites, together with their daily sacrifices, were offered up. And therefore, with his face, probably, directed thither, like Daniel in Babylon praying towards Jerusalem, he begs that God would accept of all which it was in his power to perform, namely, the devotion of his heart, and the elevation of his hands in prayer; that the one might ascend to heaven, fragrant and well pleasing, as the cloud of "incense" mounting from the holy altar; and the other, in conjunction with it, prevail instead of the "evening "oblation," for the deliverance of himself and his companions.

3. *Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth; keep the door of my lips;* or, *a guard over the door of my lips.* 4. *Incline not mine heart,* i. e. *suffer not my heart to be inclined, to* any *evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity,* or, *idolatry; and let me not eat of their dainties.*

David was now going to seek a retreat from the persecutions of his master Saul amidst a race of idolaters, who would be curious to observe all his words and actions, and would attempt to draw him in to be a partaker with them in their idol-worship, or to suspect him as a spy and an enemy, if he refused to comply with them. He therefore beseeches God to "set a watch before his mouth, a guard over the "door of his lips," that he might neither endanger his own safety by his imprudent carriage, nor violate his religion by any weak compliances. He entreats

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to be preserved from that greatest of all evils, the renouncing Jehovah to follow vain and strange gods. He desires that he might not be guilty of this heinous and presumptuous sin, no, not so much as in thought —"Suffer not mine heart to be inclined to any evil "thing;" that he might abhor to play the hypocrite, by joining in the abominations of the heathen, "the "men that work idolatry," though but in show and appearance only; and that he might never be allured by the pomp and pleasure of their feasts, by their luxurious meats and lascivious rites, to mix in their religious festivals, to eat and drink, and rise up to play—"neither let me eat of THEIR dainties." A Christian, living among unbelievers and sensualists in the world, hath abundant reason to put up the same prayers, and to use the same precautions.

5. *Let the righteous smite me;* it shall be *a kindness: and let him reprove me;* it shall be *an excellent oil,* which *shall not break,* or, *depress, my head: for yet my prayer also* shall be *in their calamities,* or, *against their wickedness.*

David continueth his prayer, and beggeth of heaven, as one of its best and choicest blessings, that if at any time, through the frailty of nature, he should be inclined to yield to the above-mentioned temptations, he might find, among his attendants, some "righteous" and faithful friend, who might, with a kind severity, check and "reprove" him. Such reproof, he says, would, at that season, be to him as שֶׁמֶן רֹאשׁ, the "chief," or most precious and excellent oil;" see Exod. xxx. 23: it would not

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"depress his head," אל ינו ראשי, or cause him to "hang it down," as people in sorrow do, but it would be "the oil of gladness," refreshing, enlivening, strengthening, and enabling him to lift up his head above the temptation against which he had been praying, and, with renewed vigour, would still continue to pray; for "yet my prayer" shall be ברעותיהם, "against their wickednesses." The blessed effects of reproof, when given and taken as it ought to be, never, surely, were more exactly or more beautifully described.

6. *When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.*

Of this verse, as it stands in our translation, I know not what can be made. When literally rendered from the Hebrew, it runs thus—"Their judges have "been dismissed in the sides of the rock, and have "heard my words that they were sweet." David, reflecting on Saul's cruelty in driving him out of his country, to wander amongst aliens and idolaters, very naturally calls to mind, and mentions, his own different behaviour towards that implacable enemy, whose life he had spared at two several times, when he had it in his power to destroy him as he pleased. "Their judges," or princes, leaders, generals, &c. according to the frequent usage of the word in Scripture, נשמטו, "have been dismissed" (the common signification of the verb שמט) "in the sides of the "rock," when I had them at an advantage there; 1 Sam. xxiv. 3. "and have heard my words, that they

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" were sweet*;" they only heard me expostulate with them in a manner so mild and humble, that even Saul himself was overcome, and " lift up his voice " and wept, saying, My son David, thou art more " righteous than I—The Lord reward thee good for " that thou hast done unto me this day:" 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. Such hath been my conduct towards the servants of Saul. Yet how have my people, alas! been by them most miserably butchered!

7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth* wood *upon the earth.*

This probably alludes to the bloody massacre of Ahimelech and the priests that were in Nob, who, to the number of eighty-five persons, all of a sacred character, and all innocent, were inhumanly slaughtered together by Doeg the Edomite. Such havock as this might well be compared to the cutting and cleaving of wood, like the fragments of which the bones of the sufferers lay scattered here and there upon the ground, as many of the bodies might be devoured, before pits were prepared, near the field of slaughter, for their interment. To feel the force of the Psalmist's expressions in this verse, we need not have recourse to such extraordinary scenes of tyranny and cruelty. The daily dissolution and destruction of our bodies, in the common way, will be found abundantly sufficient for the purpose. For who can attend the digging of a grave, and thus view

* This is Mr. PETERS's interpretation of the verse, and Dr. DURELL hath fallen upon the same.

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the ruins then disclosed, without exclaiming, "Our "bones lie scattered at the grave's mouth; as when "one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth?" Indeed, Rachel hath often had occasion to bemoan her children, thus untimely slain by the unrelenting sword of persecution. But let her refrain her voice from weeping, and her eyes from tears. Her children shall return again from the dead, and their bones shall rejoice and flourish as an herb. Jer. xxxi. 15. Isa. lxvi. 14.

8. *But mine eyes* are *unto thee, O* GOD *the* LORD: *in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.* 9. *Keep me from the snares* which *they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.*

The principle upon which David acted, and supported himself under his troubles, was a firm trust in God, and a steady resolution to obey him. With confidence, therefore, he made his prayer, that Jehovah would keep him from the snares which Saul and his counsellors had laid for him on one hand, and from those of the idolaters, among whom he was driven, on the other; that so he might not be left destitute and lose his life, or, which he prized more, his faith. For it is remarkable, that in his last speech to Saul, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. where he mentions the wicked policy of his enemies, who had contrived to force him into banishment, he mentions not the dangers of his life, but only that of his religion—"They "have driven me out this day from abiding in the "inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go serve other "gods;" intimating, that they had done what lay in their power to drive him to idolatry, by forcing him

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into a country where he would have the strongest temptation to it.

10. *Let the wicked*, or, *the wicked shall, fall into their own nets together, whilst that I withal escape.*

From the sequel of the history we find that the hope and assurance here expressed by the Psalmist were not vain. He escaped all the snares that were laid for him on every side; he lived to see the death of Saul, who fell in a battle with the Philistines, and those Philistines subdued by himself and his subjects. So will the devices of all our enemies be in the end turned against themselves: they shall fall and perish, but we shall triumph, with our Redeemer, to eternity.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLII.

ARGUMENT.

The title of this Psalm informs us, that it was a prayer of David, when he was in the cave, that is, most probably, the cave of Adullam, whither he fled when in danger both from Saul and from the Philistines: 1 Sam. xxii. 1. It containeth, 1, 2. a supplication; 3—5. an act of confidence in God at that season of danger and destitution; 6. a tender complaint of his sufferings, and, 7. a petition for deliverance. Our translators having rendered some of the verbs in the past tense, the

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liberty hath been taken to alter them, agreeably to the Hebrew, and to the tenour of the Psalm, which seemeth to be an actual prayer, and not the relation of one.

1. *I will cry unto the* LORD *with my voice; with my voice unto the* LORD *will I make my supplication.* 2. *I will pour out my complaint before him; I will show before him my trouble.*

The state of David in the cave of Adullam was a state of utter destitution. Persecuted by his own countrymen, dismissed by Achish, and not yet joined by his own relations, or any other attendants, he took refuge in the cave, and was there alone. But in that disconsolate, and seemingly desperate, situation, he desponded not. He had a friend in heaven, into whose bosom he "poured forth his complaint," and told him the sad story of his trouble and distress. When danger besetteth us around, and fear is on every side, let us follow the example of David, and that of a greater than David, who, when Jews and Gentiles conspired against him, and he was left all alone, in the garden, and on the cross, gave himself unto prayer.

3. *When my spirit is overwhelmed within me, then thou knowest my path. In the way wherein I walk, have they privily laid a snare for me.*

The meaning is, Though my thoughts are so broken and confused, that I am not able to counsel and direct myself in these straits, yet thou knowest the path wherein I walk, thou art with me, and wilt preserve me from those who watch all my steps, and

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lie in ambush for me. Such should be at all times the confidence of believers in the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, even when human prudence has done its utmost, and is at its wit's end.

4. *Look on* my *right hand, and see that* there is *no man that will know me: refuge faileth me; no man careth for my soul.* b. *I cry unto thee,* O LORD; *I say, Thou* art *my refuge* and *my portion in the land of the living.*

David beseecheth God to consider his destitute condition, to "look on his right hand," the place where the advocate used to stand, and to "see that "there was no man that would know," acknowledge him, and take his part; "refuge failed him;" there was on earth no patron to whom he could commit himself and his cause; no one, דורש, that would "seek, require, or avenge his soul." Thus Dr. Hammond expounds the words in a forensic sense. How affectingly do they describe the destitution of David in the cave, and that of the Son of David in the day of his passion, death, and burial! Death will, in like manner, strip us of all our earthly connexions and dependences. But even at that hour, may we, each of us, "cry unto thee, O Lord, and "say, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the "land of the living."

6. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.* 7. *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for,* or, *when, thou shalt deal bountifully with me.*

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This prayer of David was heard and answered; he was delivered from his persecutors, enlarged from his distress, exalted to the throne, and joined by all the tribes of Israel. The true David was delivered from his stronger persecutors, brought from the sepulchre, exalted to his heavenly throne, owned and submitted to by the converted nations, who became the Israel and people of God. Nor let us fear, though we be brought very low, and our persecutors, the world, the flesh, and the devil, be at any time too strong for us. God will deliver us from the bondage of sin, and redeem us from the prison of the grave, to join the great assembly before the throne, and there to praise his name for ever.

PSALM CXLIII.

ARGUMENT.

This is the seventh and last of the Penitential Psalms; and as we are not informed of any particular temporal calamities, which gave occasion to its being composed, we shall explain it according to the general use now made of it in the church, for which, indeed, it seems to have been originally and entirely designed. After the example of David, the penitent, 1. maketh his prayer to God for pardon; 2. acknowledgeth the impossibility of any man being saved but by grace; 3, 4. deploreth the lamentable effects of sin; 5. comforteth himself with a retrospect of God's

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mercies of old; and, 6—12. prayeth, in a variety of expressions, for remission of sin, sanctification, and redemption.

1. *Hear my prayer, O* LORD, *give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*

When Mary Magdalene washed the feet of Christ with her tears, he knew what the petition was which her soul desired to have granted, and answered it accordingly, before it was made in words, by saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Thus the penitent, without mentioning the subject of his request, as being well known to God, begs that his "prayer and "supplication may be heard and answered," agreeably to the "faithfulness and righteousness of Je-"hovah."

2. *And enter not into judgement with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

In the first verse, the suppliant appealed to the promises of God, and his fidelity in performing them. Here he urgeth the fallen, sinful, wretched state of human nature, which hath rendered it absolutely impossible that any son of Adam can be saved, should God "enter into judgement with him," and exact the punishment due to his offences according to the LAW, instead of pardoning them by an act of GRACE. The thoughts of such a trial are enough to appal the soul of the best man living, to make his flesh tremble, and all his bones shake, as if he stood at the foot of Sinai, and beheld Jehovah ready to

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break forth upon him in the flame of devouring fire.

3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

We have an "enemy" who "persecutes" us with unrelenting malice; he "smites our life down "to the ground," as often as we yield to temptation, and fall from our state of holiness, to grovel in base and earthly desires; he "makes us to dwell in dark-"ness," when he has thus withdrawn us from the light of heaven, which before illuminated us, while we walked in it; the spiritual life, for a time, is extinguished, and we become, for all the purposes of faith and charity, "like those that have been long "dead. Therefore," at the consideration of this our sad estate, when God has enabled us to see and know it, our "spirit is overwhelmed within us," with remorse, anxiety, and despondency; and "our heart "within us," deprived of the comforts of conscience, the joys of the Spirit, and the presence of the Beloved, "is desolate," forlorn, miserable. To rescue the sinner from this disconsolate and lost condition, our blessed Saviour was forsaken on the cross; "his "spirit was overwhelmed within him, and his heart "within him was desolate; the enemy" was suffered to "smite his" precious "life down to the ground," and he "dwelt," for three days, "in darkness, as "the men that have been long dead."

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5. *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*

When sin has thus laid us low, and, as it were, slain and entombed us, we begin to revive and to arise from the dead, through hope of forgiveness and restoration to the divine favour, by "remembering "the days of old, and meditating on all the works" of love and mercy, which Jehovah then wrought towards those who were sinners like ourselves. While we "muse" on such instances of his goodness, the reflection is obvious, Is he not still the same gracious God? Will he not do as much for us, upon our repentance, as he hath formerly done for others, upon theirs? "Let us arise, and go to our "Father!"

6. *I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul* thirsteth *after thee as a thirsty land.*

Prayer is the voice of faith. The sinner who views his situation, and believes, on having considered God's works of old, that he shall be delivered out of it, will soon "stretch forth his hands," in supplication to heaven. His soul will gasp and pant after that grace and mercy which descend from above, like the rain in its season, to bestow refreshment, beauty, and fertility, on a parched and "thirsty land." While we recite this verse, let us not be unmindful of Him, whose hands were often stretched forth in prayer for his people, and whose soul thirsted after our salvation, even then, when he felt extremity of bodily thirst on the cross.

7. *Hear me speedily, O* LORD: *my spirit faileth;*

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hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

These words would come with propriety from the mouth of one in danger of temporal death. They are no less proper in the mouth of him who is in danger of death eternal. Rather, they receive an additional force and energy when used in this latter sense.

8. *Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.*

The penitent prayeth, that he may "hear the "voice of God's loving kindness," speaking pardon and peace to his soul, "in the morning" speedily and early, after the long dark night of fear and sorrow through which he is passing. This he hopes, because, disclaiming all other reliance, he placeth his confidence in God alone; "in thee do I trust." Nor is he only solicitous for the forgiveness of what is past, but for future direction in the course of duty; "show thou me the way wherein I should "walk." And to the end that he may follow such directions, he hath withdrawn his affections from things below, and set them on things above; "I "lift up my soul unto thee."

9. *Deliver me, O* LORD, *from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.* 10. *Teach me to do thy will; for thou* art *my God: thy Spirit* is *good; lead me,* or, *let thy good Spirit lead me, into the land of uprightness.*

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He continueth to pray that he may be "delivered "from his enemies," the world, the flesh, and the devil, from whose temptations he "fleeth," by repentance and faith, to the Almighty, to "hide" and protect him. He requesteth to be fully instructed in the "will" of him, whom, as his Lord and his "God," he hath determined to serve and obey. But conscious of his own inability to do the will of Jehovah, even when known, he entreateth the good Spirit of God to "lead" him out of the mazes of error and the pollutions of vice, into the pleasant "land" of truth and holiness *.

11. *Quicken me, O* LORD, *for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble.* 12. *And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for* I am *thy servant.*

The verbs in these two last verses, as Dr. Hammond hath noted, should be rendered in the future; "Thou shalt quicken," &c. and then the Psalm will end, as usual, with an act of faith and assurance, that all those mercies which have been asked shall be obtained; that God, for the sake of his "name," and his "righteousness," of his glory, and his faithfulness in the performance of his promises, will not fail to be favourable and gracious to his servants,

* Mr. MERRICK mentions the similar phrase of πεδιον αληθειας, and λειμων αληθειας, among the Greeks. Or ארץ מישור may signify "the land that is plain and direct, even and straight," where he might pursue his intended course of piety and goodness, without fear of meeting with obstructions in the way, or danger of wandering out of it.

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"quickening" them, even when dead in trespasses and sins, and bringing them, by degrees, "out of "all their troubles;" going forth with them to the battle against their spiritual "enemies," and enabling them to vanquish the authors of their "affliction" and misery, to mortify the flesh, and to overcome the world; that so they may triumph with their Redeemer, in the day when he shall likewise quicken their mortal bodies, and put all enemies under their feet.

THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLIV.

ARGUMENT.

It appears from verse 2. and verse 10. of this Psalm, that it was composed after David's accession to the throne. And it is evident, from verse 5, &c. that he had more enemies still to conquer, such as the Philistines, &c. He, therefore, 1, 2. blesseth Jehovah; and, 3, 4. expresseth his astonishment at the divine goodness shown to such a creature as man; 5—8. he beseecheth God to perfect his work, and subdue the remaining adversaries by the might of his power. 9, 10. He breaks forth again into a strain of thanksgiving, and, 11—15. again returns to his prayers for the complete redemption, and the prosperity of Israel. If we substitute in our minds, Messiah for David, the

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church for Israel, and spiritual for temporal blessings, the Psalm will present itself to us as a noble evangelical hymn.

1. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *my strength, which teacheth my hands to war*, and *my fingers to fight.*

What David here acknowledgeth, with regard to his victories, and that skill or might by which they were obtained, should be likewise acknowledged by all earthly kings and generals, in the day of battle and conquest. For success in our spiritual warfare, we depend on the grace of God, which alone can give us wisdom and "strength to have victory, and "triumph against sin, the world, and the devil." Even the Captain of our salvation fought and overcame by a power that was divine. "Jehovah taught "HIS hands to war, and HIS fingers to fight." And "blessed, on that account, be the name of Jehovah, in the church, for evermore.

2. *My goodness,* Heb. *my mercy* *, *and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and* he *in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.*

The "goodness," or "mercy," of God inclineth us in time of trouble, to fly to him as to a "for-"tress," or "tower," in which we find refuge; and when we have thus put ourselves under his patron-

* That is, "who art merciful to me," the abstract being put for the concrete, as in Ps. xii. 1. Prov. x. 29. Ezek. xliv. 6. Hos. viii. 9. Dr. DURELL thinks we should read מחסי, "my re-"fuge," as in other parallel places.

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age, he becometh our "deliverer" from present danger; our "shield," or protector, against any that may afterwards arise; the object of our unlimited "trust" and confidence; and, at last, the "subduer" of all opposition "under us."

3. LORD, *what* is *man, that thou takest knowledge of him?* or *the son of man, that thou makest account of him?* 4. *Man is like to vanity: his days* are *as a shadow that passeth away.*

After a thanksgiving for the works which Jehovah had wrought, followeth a reflection on the creature "man," for whom they were wrought. Such a reflection introduced in the same manner, and almost in the same words, we meet with in Ps. viii. 4, which passage, being cited by the apostle, Heb. ii. 6. and applied to Christ, affords an argument, as Dr. Hammond hath justly observed, for a like application of the verses now before us, in their more eminent, prophetic, mystical sense. For, certainly, if David, upon the remembrance of what God had done for him, could break forth into this reflection, much more may we do so, for whom the Redeemer hath been manifested in the form of a servant, and in that form hath humbled himself to the death of the cross, to gain us the victory over principalities and powers, to put all things under our feet, and to make us partakers of his everlasting kingdom. Lord, what, indeed, is man, אדם, or, what is the son of such a miserable creature, בן־אנוש, that thou shouldst take this knowledge, and make this account, of him? man, who is now become like vanity, or instability, itself; whose days are fleeting and transient as a shadow,

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which glides over the earth, vanishes, and is seen no more! Such was human nature: but the Son of God hath taken it upon himself, rendered it immortal, and exalted it to heaven; whither all will follow him hereafter, who follow him now in the paths of righteousness and holiness.

5. *Bow thy heavens, O* LORD, *and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.* 6. *Cast forth lightning, and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.* 7. *Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;* 8. *Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand* is *a right hand of falsehood.*

David, having celebrated his victories over some of his enemies, and extolled the mercy and goodness of God, to whom he ascribeth the achievement of them, now proceedeth to request a farther manifestation of the omnipotent arm in his favour, against other hostile forces, which still threatened his country upon his accession to the throne; such as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, &c. see 2 Sam. v. and viii. These are called, metaphorically, "great "waters," threatening to overwhelm and destroy every thing; and, in plainer terms, "strange chil- "dren," or aliens from the covenant of Jehovah, and the commonwealth of Israel; children who "speak "lies, and work wickedness;" or, as Dr. Hammond interpreteth the 8th verse, "whose mouth speaketh, "or maketh profession of, vanity, שוא, that is, idola- "try; and their right hand," that on which they depend for support, the object of their confidence, "is

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"a right hand of falsehood," שֶׁקֶר, and one that will fail all who rely upon it for help. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is therefore entreated once more to appear in the cause of his anointed; to go forth, as of old, to the battle against the enemies of his people, with all the tokens of displeasure and vengeance, dismaying and putting to flight these "armies of aliens." In like manner, the church, or mystical body of Christ, is instant in prayer for the final completion of her hope. She wisheth for the glorious day, when her God and Saviour shall bow the heavens, and come down to judgement, causing the mountains to smoke, and flame, and dissolve, and flow down before him; when his lightnings, those arrows of his indignation, and ministers of his vengeance, shall scatter the host of darkness, and destroy the anti-christian powers; when we shall be delivered from every enemy, and from all that hate us, and David our King.

9. *I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings, will I sing praises unto thee.* 10. It is he *that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.*

In the mean time, as the Israelitish church praised Jehovah for the mercies already vouchsafed to the son of Jesse, so do we daily magnify, with voices and instruments of music, that salvation which God hath effected for us, by the deliverance of his Son, our Lord, from death and the grave.

11. *Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and*

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their right hand is *a right hand of falsehood*: 12. *That our sons* may *be as plants grown up in their youth*; that *our daughters* may be *as corner stones, polished* after *the similitude of a palace*. 13. That *our garners* may be *full, affording all manner of store*, that *our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets*, or, *fields*: 14. That *our oxen* may be *strong to labour*; that there be *no breaking in, nor going out*; that there be *no complaining in our streets*.

Prayer is again made for a continuance of God's favour, and a complete victory over every enemy; the happy consequences of which, in the establishment of Israel, and the prosperity of Jerusalem, are particularly described. Victory is productive of peace, and peace is the mother of all earthly blessings to communities, and the families that compose them; whose happiness consisteth in a numerous and hopeful progeny of sons and daughters; the former healthy and well nurtured, growing up, like young plants in a kindly soil, until they attain to their full strength and stature; the latter, fair and virtuous, like so many tall, well-proportioned, highly polished, and richly ornamented columns, gracing the house to which they belong. When to these we have added plenty of corn, and all other provisions, in the granaries and storehouses; flocks and herds, ever thriving and increasing; freedom from hostile invasions and domestic complaints, so that there be "no break-"ing in, nor going out," no irruption of aliens into the commonwealth, nor emigration of inhabitants to foreign countries, by captivity, or otherwise; we

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shall find ourselves possessed of most of the ingredients, which enter into the composition of temporal felicity. Such felicity God promised to his people Israel, and bestowed on them, while they kept his statutes, and observed his laws. And therefore there is no reason for supposing, as the fathers, with many others, have done, that these wishes for "sons, "daughters, corn, sheep, oxen, &c." are uttered by the "strange children," the aliens and idolaters, mentioned in the 11th verse. The good things of this world may fall to the lot of the righteous, who are distinguished from the wicked by the use which they make of them, when given; and by their meek resignation of them, when taken away. Whatever be the will of God concerning our having or wanting these outward comforts, we know that we have, as the faithful servants of God in every age had before us, greater and more precious promises, a better and an enduring substance, pleasures that fade not, and riches that fly not away, reserved for us in a heavenly country, and a city which hath foundations.

15. *Happy* is that *people that is in such a case:* yea, *happy* is that *people, whose God* is *the* LORD.

The Psalmist concludes with pronouncing the happiness of the Israelites, when in the state of prosperity above described, and their far greater happiness in "having Jehovah for their God," who, by settling them in peaceful possession of the land of Canaan, and the Jerusalem below, gave them a pledge and foretaste of that love, which stood engaged by covenant to bring them and us to his everlasting rest, in the Jerusalem above.

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PSALM CXLV.

ARGUMENT.

Hitherto, in this divine book, we have been presented with checkered scenes of danger and deliverance, distress and mercy. The voice of complaint hath sometimes been succeeded by that of thanksgiving; and praise, at other times, hath terminated in prayer. But now, as if the days of mourning in Zion were ended, we hear no more of Messiah, as a man of sorrows; or of the church, as despised and afflicted, after the same example in the world. Henceforth we seem not to be upon earth, but in heaven, mingling with celestial spirits around the throne, and singing, as in the following Psalm, 1, 2. the praises of our God and King; extolling, 3. his greatness, 4. his might, 5. his glory, 6, 7. his justice, 8, 9. his mercy; 10—13. the majesty of his kingdom, and, 14—21. all his adorable perfections, and wondrous works. This is an alphabetical Psalm. The verse, which should begin with the letter Nun, is wanting. But, as Dr. Hammond hath observed, it is not uncommon for one letter, or more, to be left out in an alphabetical Psalm, as in Ps. xxv. where ר being twice repeated, נ is certainly omitted. We shall therefore content ourselves, with what we find in

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the original Hebrew, and in the Chaldee, without inserting the verse which is now read in the LXX, and other translations. Bishop Patrick mentions a saying of the ancient Hebrews, taken notice of by Valentine Schindler, that "He could not fail "to be a child of the world to come, who would "say this Psalm three times every day." Perhaps they who, while they chant it in full choir, enter thoroughly into the spirit of it, do experience as lively a foretaste of the next world, as can be experienced in this.

1. *I will extol thee, my God, O King; and will bless thy name for ever and ever.* 2. *Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.*

The same divine person, who was, in a peculiar manner, the "God" and "King" of Israel, now standeth in those relations to the Gentile Christian church, and by her is "extolled" in the words of this Psalm, originally composed and used for that purpose among the Israelites. Christ is our "God," who hath saved us according to his covenant and promise; he is our "King," who hath set up the universal and everlasting kingdom, foretold by Daniel and the other prophets; who hath "all power in heaven "and earth;" and who "must reign till he hath "put all enemies under his feet and swallowed "up death in victory." In the mean time it is the daily employment of us, his redeemed subjects and servants, to chant forth the praises of his saving and

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glorious "name," with which the church, on earth, and in heaven, will resound "for ever and ever."

3. *Great* is *the* LORD, *and greatly to be praised; and his greatness* is *unsearchable.* 4. *One generation shall praise thy works unto another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*

The "greatness" of Jehovah, whether we consider it as relating to his essence or his works, is never to be fully comprehended by his saints, whose delight it is to contemplate "the breadth, and length, "and depth, and height," Ephes. iii. 18., the extent and duration of his being and his kingdom, the profundity of his counsels, and the sublimity of his power and glory. These are the inexhaustible subjects of divine meditation, transmitted from age to age. And as the greatness of God our Saviour hath no bounds, so his praises should have no end, nor should the voice of thanksgiving ever cease in the church. As "one generation" drops it, "another" should take it up, and prolong the delightful strain, till the sun and the moon shall withdraw their light, and the stars fall extinguished from their orbs.

5. *I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.* 6. *And* men *shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.* 7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.*

Those works of God, which demand to be celebrated by the tongues of men, are here divided into three kinds. First, such as declare his glory and excite our admiration whenever we behold them. Of

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this sort are the shining frame of the heavens, and all the bodies which move therein; the earth, with its furniture without, and its contents within; the magnificent and stupendous ocean, which flows around it; the different tribes of animals inhabiting both the one and the other; and, above all, the construction of man, the lord of this lower world. Under the second class of God's works are ranged all those which the Psalmist styleth his "terrible acts," or the exertions of his power against his enemies; such as, the destruction of the old world by water; of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire; Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; of the Canaanitish nations by the sword; and the victory gained over sin and death by the resurrection of Christ. In the third rank stand those works which have proceeded from the "goodness" of God, and his "righteousness" in the performance of his promises. And among these we may reckon all the different species of provision, which have been made by providence for the bodies of men in the world, and by grace for their souls in the church. On any of these subjects meditation cannot be long employed, without breaking forth into wonder, gratitude, and praise.

8. *The* LORD is *gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.* 9. *The* LORD is *good to all: and his tender mercies* are *over all his works.*

Mercy hath misery for its object, and is that attribute towards which the eyes of a fallen world must naturally be turned. The Psalmist hath, accordingly, introduced her last, with great pomp and splendor, seated in her triumphal chariot, and in-

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vested with a supremacy over all the works of God. She is above the heavens, and over all the earth, so that the whole creation findeth that refuge under the shadow of her wings, of which, by reason of man's transgression, it standeth in need. The original word for "his tender mercies," is רחמיו, the singular of which, רחם, signifies the "womb." The "mercies" of God towards men are, therefore, represented, by this word, to be like those of a mother towards the child of her "womb." And this is the very similitude which he himself hath made use of, in that most affecting and comforting passage of the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. xlix. 15.: "Can a woman forget her "sucking child, that she should not have compassion "on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, "yet will I not forget thee."—And now, what follows? Are such "tender mercies" in God? And are they "over all his works?" Why then,

10. *All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD; *and thy saints shall bless thee.* 11. *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;* 12. *To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.* 13. *Thy kingdom* is *an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion* endureth *throughout all generations.*

As "all the works" of God, in their several ways, make a due return for the mercy vouchsafed unto them, and set forth his glory; so more especially ought this to be done by man, who is the principal party concerned in the fall and redemption. The "saints" are the subjects of Messiah's kingdom; and of that kingdom it is their duty to publish to the

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world the blessings and the glories, to the end that, when these are made known, the nations may be thereby induced to submit their hearts to so gracious a sceptre, and the dominion of Christ may become as universal in its extent, as it is everlasting in its duration.

14. *The* LORD *upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all* those that be *bowed down.*

After having proclaimed the glory and eternity of the kingdom, the Prophet draws a character of the King, who, in the execution of his regal and pastoral office, is ever mindful of the necessities of his subjects. To those who, like Peter on the water, are sinking under temptation, he stretcheth out his saving arm, supporting and "upholding" them by his grace; and to those who, like the woman in the Gospel, have long been "bowed down" with sin or sorrow, he holdeth forth a pardon, "raising" and setting them upright again by his mercy. The case is the same with regard to outward distresses, from which God either preserves or delivers his people, as he sees best for them.

15. *The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.* 16. *Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*

What a just and beautiful picture is here presented to view! We see the whole animal world assembled before us, with their eyes fixed on the great King and Father of all things, like those of a flock on their shepherd, when he enters the field, in time of dearth, with provender for them. From the same

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divine person, as the Saviour of men, as the King, Father, and Pastor of the church, do believers, with earnest expectation, wait for the food of eternal life. And neither one nor the other look and wait in vain. To both he giveth their meat in due season; "he "openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every "living thing."

17. *The* LORD *is righteous in all his ways, and holy*, or, *good, merciful, in all his works.*

Thus, "in all his ways," or dispensations towards his creatures, whether in nature or in grace, "Je-"hovah is righteous," faithful, and just, in extending his promised care, by making due provision for their wants; and "all his works," which, from the beginning of the world, he hath wrought in behalf of the sons of men, are full of "mercy and loving "kindness."

18. *The* LORD *is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.* 19. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

It is our happiness to have a King, who is not, like earthly princes, difficult of access, but one of whom the meanest subject may at any time obtain an audience, and be certain of having his request granted, if it be made "in truth," without wavering, and without hypocrisy, with humble confidence, and with unwearied constancy, expecting salvation from God, from none but him, and from him only in the way of duty and obedience: "he will fulfil the "desire of them that fear him."

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20. *The* LORD *preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.*

To protect his subjects, and destroy their enemies, is the finishing part of the regal character, as here drawn from its great original in "the King of saints." By his grace he now preserveth us from innumerable dangers and temptations, and gradually destroyeth sin in us: and by his power he will hereafter execute, in the fullest and most extensive sense, this part of his office, "when the wicked shall be consumed with "the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the "brightness of his coming." Then the bodies of the righteous, preserved to a joyful resurrection, shall be reunited to their souls, and both together, perfected and glorified, shall reign and shine with him for ever. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ "preserveth all "that love him," and maketh good his promise, "There shall not an hair of your head perish." Luke xxi. 18.

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the* LORD: *and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.*

The Psalmist, having now given the reasons why he had resolved to "extol his God and King, and "to bless his name for ever and ever," concludes with repeating his resolution, and exhorts all the world to follow his example, in time and eternity.

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PSALM CXLVI.

ARGUMENT.

In this Psalm, the church is taught, 1, 2. to prolong the praises of Jehovah, as her God and King; 3—6. to beware of trusting in the powers of the world, and to rely on the world's Creator and Redeemer, whose miracles of love and mercy, wrought for the children of men, 7—9. are enumerated, and the eternity of whose kingdom, 10. is proclaimed.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. *Praise the* LORD, *O my soul.* 2. *While I live will I praise the* LORD: *I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being.*

No sooner is one Hallelujah ended, but another begins; and the prophet, in imitation of those who "rest not day nor night," stirs himself up afresh to praise the King of glory, the Creator and Redeemer of men, declaring himself resolved to employ the powers and faculties of his soul in the service of that God, who gave and preserved them.

3. *Put not your trust in princes,* nor *in the son of man, in whom* there is *no help.* 4. *His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.* 5. *Happy* is he *that* hath *the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope* is *in the* LORD *his God;* 6. *Which made heaven and earth,*

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the sea, and all that therein is: *which keepeth truth for ever:*

From Him, who is "the prince of the kings of "the earth," Sion looks for deliverance, and by Him her true sons expect to be exalted. He "keepeth "truth for ever;" he is able and willing to perform his promises, and never disappoints those who rely on him. There are no changes in the politics of heaven. The faithful servant of his Master is by that Master infallibly approved and rewarded. Earthly princes, if they have the will, often want the power, even to protect their friends. And should they want neither will nor power to advance them, yet still all depends upon the breath in their nostrils, which, perhaps, at the very critical moment, "goeth "forth; they return to their earth; their thoughts," and all the thoughts of those who had hoped to rise by their means, fall into the same grave, and are buried with them for ever. "Cease ye from man, "whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to "be accounted of? But trust ye in the Lord for "ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting "strength." Isa. ii. 22. xxvi. 4.

7. *Which executeth judgement for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The* Lord *looseth the prisoners:* 8. *The* Lord *openeth* the eyes of *the blind: the* Lord *raiseth them that are bowed down: the* Lord *loveth the righteous:* 9. *The* Lord *preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.*

That the Lord, of whom all these things are

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spoken, is the Messiah, or Jehovah incarnate, appears, as Dr. Hammond hath justly observed, from what is said of him in verse 8. "The Lord openeth "the eyes of the blind;" the miracle of restoring sight to men born blind being one reserved for the Son of God to work, at his coming in the flesh. "Since the world began," saith the man to whom sight had been thus restored, "was it not heard, "that any man opened the eyes of one that was "born blind;" John ix. 32. This therefore was the first of those tokens given by Jesus to the disciples of John, whereby it might be known, that he was the expected Christ; "Go and tell John the things "which ye have heard and seen; The blind receive "their sight," &c. But how did this evince him to be the Messiah? Plainly, because it had been foretold by the prophets (as in Isaiah xxxv. 5. xxix. 18. xlii. 18., so in this passage of our Psalm, which is exactly similar to those texts), that Messiah, when he came, should give sight to the blind. Now, if one part of the Psalmist's description belong to Christ, the other members of it must do so likewise, it being evident that the whole is spoken of the same person. He, therefore, is "the God of Jacob, "who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that "therein is;" and, upon his appearing among men in the body of our flesh, he showed himself possessed of power to relieve all the wants, corporal and spiritual, of poor lost mankind. When he rescued men from the bondage of Satan, he "executed "judgement for the oppressed:" when he fed thou-

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sands by a miracle, or when he preached the word to such as desired to hear and receive it, he "gave "food to the hungry:" when, by pardon and grace, he released those who were bound with the chains of their sins, he "loosed the prisoners:" when he poured light into the sightless eye-ball, or illuminated with saving knowledge the understanding of the ignorant, he "opened the eyes of the blind:" when he made the crooked woman straight, or rectified the obliquity of a depraved will, he "raised those that "were bowed down:" while he protecteth, and guideth to the city of their eternal habitation, the sons of Adam, who are exiles, pilgrims, and sojourners upon earth, he "preserveth the strangers;" when he became a husband to the church, and a parent to her destitute children, he "relieved the fatherless and "widow:" and when he shall come in his glorious majesty, to reward his servants, and to confound their enemies, it will be seen how "he loveth the "righteous, and turneth the way of the wicked up-"side down." Happy the people of such a God; happy the subjects of such a King! Rejoice, and sing, and shout aloud; for lo,

10. *The* LORD *shall reign for ever*, even *thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the* LORD.

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THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLVII.

ARGUMENT.

It hath been conjectured from ver. 2. that this Psalm was written to celebrate the return of Israel from Babylon, when Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt. 1—3. The people of God are exhorted to praise him for the mercies vouchsafed to them; 4—6. for his wisdom, power, and goodness; 7—9. for his providential care, and, 10, 11. the wonderful salvation wrought by his arm; 12—14. for the security, increase, and prosperity of the church; 15—18. for the happy change of her condition, like that produced in nature, when spring succeeds to winter; 19, 20. and for the glorious privilege of the divine word, revealed and committed to her.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD: *for* it is *good to sing praises unto our God; for* it is *pleasant;* and *praise is comely.*

Praise is "good" and acceptable to God our Saviour, whose glory is the great end of man's creation and redemption: and it is "pleasant and "comely" for man, being the only return he can make for those, and all other mercies; the offspring of gratitude, and the expression of love; the eleva-

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tion of the soul, and the antepast of heaven; its own reward in this life, and an introduction to the felicities of the next.

2. *The* LORD *doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*

If this Psalm were written on occasion of the return from Babylon, and the rebuilding of the earthly city, the ideas are to be transferred, as in other Psalms of the same kind, to a more important restoration from a much worse captivity, and to the building up of the church under the Gospel, when Christ "gathered together in one the children of "God that were scattered abroad;" John xi. 52. that is, in the words of our Psalm, he "gathered "together the outcasts of Israel!" So shall he again, at the resurrection, "gather together his elect "from the four winds," Matt. xxiv. 31. and "build "up a Jerusalem," in which they shall serve and praise him for ever.

3. *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*

The "broken hearts and wounded spirits" of the Israelites were "healed and made whole," when they returned to their own land, when they beheld Jerusalem rising again in beauteous majesty, and sung the songs of Zion in the courts of the temple. Thus Christ came to "preach deliverance to the "captives, and to bind up the broken-hearted;" Isa. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. to speak pardon and peace to the wounded and contrite spirit, and to put a new song of thanksgiving in the mouth of the penitent, which he might sing, when restored to the holy city,

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and the house of his heavenly Father. The hour is coming, when God shall heal the breaches which death has made in the bodies of his people, and translate them likewise from Babylon to Jerusalem.

4. *He telleth the number of the stars: he calleth them all by* their *names.*

And he who does this, cannot be ignorant of the situation and circumstances of his elect. He knoweth each individual, and numbereth all the atoms which go to the composition of his frame. He can call his saints from the depths of earth and sea, "by their names," as when once "he cried with a "loud voice, Lazarus, come forth;" and he can fix them in radiant circles round his throne in the kingdom of glory, vying, for multitude, as well as splendour, with those bright orbs which glitter by night in the spangled firmament of heaven; so that what Baruch saith of the stars, may well be applied to the seed of Abraham, of whom it was foretold, that they should equal the stars in number, Gen. xv. 5. "The stars shine in their watches, and re-"joice; when he calleth them, they say, Here we "be; and so with cheerfulness they show light unto "him that made them." Baruch iii. 34.

5. *Great* is *our* LORD, *and of great power: his understanding* is *infinite:* Heb. *of his understanding there is no number,* or, *computation;* אין מספר.

This is a proper conclusion drawn from the former part of the Psalm, and especially from the preceding verse. The greatness of God's power, which overcometh all difficulties to effect the salvation of his people, is not to be grasped by the human mind;

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and that wisdom which numbers the stars of heaven, and the sand of the sea, and the generations of the sons of Abraham, can itself be subject to the rules of no arithmetic.

6. *The* LORD *lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.*

To exalt and reward the humble, penitent, believing, and obedient; to depress and punish the proud, impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient; these are the measures and ends of all the divine dispensations. And as a man ranks himself in one or other of these two divisions, he may expect from heaven storm or sunshine, mercy or judgement.

7. *Sing unto the* LORD *with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.* 8. *Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.* 9. *He giveth to the beast his food,* and *to the young ravens which cry.*

The faithful praise God for his goodness to the animal world, both on account of that goodness in itself, and also because they behold therein an emblem and assurance of his mercy to themselves. The watchful care of Providence over all creatures, speaks the same language to us, which Jehovah made use of to Joshua, and which the apostle hath applied to Christians: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake "thee:" Josh. i. 5. Heb. xiii. 5. He who, by sending rain on the mountains, which could not otherwise be watered, provideth food for the wild beasts inhabiting those mountains, will never leave the lambs of his flock destitute. And he who feedeth the young

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of the unclean raven, when they cry, and, as it were, in their way, call upon him for a supply of their wants, will he, in the day of dearth and calamity, forsake the meek and harmless dove, that mourneth continually in prayer before him? The desponding servant of God need only therefore put to himself the question which we find asked by the Creator, in the book of Job, chap. xxxviii. 41.: "Who provideth "for the raven his food? When his young ones cry "unto God, they wander for lack of meat;" they wander and find it. Our Lord pressed this argument on his disciples; Luke xii. 24. "Consider "the ravens;" Matt. vi. 26. Behold the fowls of "the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, "nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father "feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

Behold, and look away your low despair;
See the light tenants of the barren air:
To them, nor stores, nor granaries belong,
Nought but the woodland, and the pleasing song;
Yet, your kind heav'nly Father bends his eye
On the least wing that flits along the sky.
To him they sing, when spring renews the plain,
To him they cry, in winter's pinching reign;
Nor is their music, nor their plaint, in vain:
He hears the gay, and the distressful call,
And with unsparing bounty fills them all.
Will he not care for you, ye faithless, say?
Is he unwise? Or, are ye less than they?

THOMSON.

10. *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.* 11.

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The LORD *taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*

If, therefore, the inference deduced above be a just one, namely, that God, who takes care of the wild beasts, and the birds of the air, will support and defend his church; then, however weak she may be, and however strong her adversaries may be, yet she may rest secure, as having him on her side, to whom it is equal, to save by many, or by few; who giveth not the victory to the pomp and pride of carnal strength, to thousands or ten thousands, but to "those who fear him, and hope in his mercy." The history of Israel is one continual exemplification of this truth; and, in our spiritual warfare, "this is "the victory which overcometh the world, even our "FAITH." 1 John v. 4.

12. *Praise the* LORD, *O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.* 13. *For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.* 14. *He maketh peace* in *thy borders,* and *filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*

The church, like Jerusalem of old, erected and preserved by the wisdom, and power, and goodness, of God, is exhorted to praise him for all the benefits and blessings vouchsafed unto her; for the increase of "her children within her;" for the "peace" which she at any time enjoyeth "in her borders," while she is here below; for the plentiful provision made by her pastors, to satisfy the needs of those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and for the protection of the Almighty, "strengthening

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"the bars of her gates," and securing to her the possession of all these comforts; which, in the heavenly Jerusalem, shall be rendered perfect and indefeasible for evermore.

15. *He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.* 16. *He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.* 17. *He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?* 18. *He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow,* and *the waters flow.*

The wonders of nature represent to us the miracles of grace; and the change of seasons produceth not greater alterations in the world, than those which take place in the church, when her God hideth from her, or restoreth to her, the light of his countenance, which, like its emblem, the bright ruler in the heavens, at its departure leaves winter behind it; and brings the spring with it at its return. "The sun," says bishop Sherlock, "is the great spirit of the "world, in the light of which all things are made to "rejoice; perpetual spring attends his course; all "things revive at his approach, and put on a new "face of youth and beauty; winter and frost lag "behind him; nature grows deformed, and sickens "at his departure." Discourses, vol. v. What the sun is to the world, the same is Christ to the church. When the heart of man turns away from him, and deprives itself of his gracious illumination; when ignorance succeeds to knowledge, that is, darkness to light; when faith fails, and all its fair pro-

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ductions wither away; when "the love of many is "waxen cold," and the fertilizing streams of charity are frozen to the bottom: On the other hand, when God "sendeth out his WORD, and melteth them;" when he "bloweth with his SPIRIT, and," by these genial influences from above, "the waters are made "to flow;" when faith revives, and shoots into vigour, and beauty, and fruitfulness; and when the hearts of men are warmed, as well as their understandings illuminated: What is all this, but a winter, and a spring, like those which, in their turns, annually deform and renew the face of the earth, at the "word and command of God," in either case, "running swiftly," and operating efficaciously?

19. *He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgements unto Israel.* 20. *He hath not dealt so with any nation: and* as for his *judgements, they have not known them. Praise ye the* LORD.

That "word," the effects of which upon the spiritual system are similar to those experienced by nature in the vernal season, that "word was showed "unto Jacob," and became the property of "Israel," while Israel continued to be the church of God. It hath since been made over, with all its types realized and its prophecies accomplished in Jesus, to the church Christian; it is that peculiar blessing, which distinguishes her from the rest of the world, and for which her children are bound, at all times, to "praise the LORD."

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PSALM CXLVIII.

ARGUMENT.

All the creatures in the invisible and visible world are called upon by the Psalmist to unite in a grand chorus of praise and thanksgiving. The various parts are to be performed by, 1, 2. the angelic hosts; 3—6. the material heavens, and the luminaries placed in them; 7. the ocean, with its inhabitants; 8. the meteors of the air; 9, 10. the earth, as divided into hills and valleys, with the vegetables that grow out of it, and the animals that move upon, or about it; 11—13. the human race of every degree, of each sex, and of every age; 14. more especially the Israel, or church of God.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. *Praise ye the* LORD *from the heavens: praise him in the heights.* 2. *Praise ye him, all ye angels; praise ye him, all his hosts.*

When St. John saw in vision the King of glory seated on his throne, he tells us that he heard all the angels which stood around the throne, with the elders, and every creature in heaven, earth, and sea, lifting up their voices, and singing together a hymn of thanksgiving in honour of him. Such a choir we find here summoned by the inspired Psalmist, and exhorted to join and assist him in praising the same Divine Person, whom the elders, in the Revelation,

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declare "worthy to receive glory, and honour, and "power," because he "created all things, and for "his pleasure they are and were created:" Rev. v. 13. iv. 11. From the heavens and those unutterable heights, where hosts of immortal spirits, admitted to a sight of their King, enjoy unfading pleasures, the song is to begin. And when the strain is thus set by the celestial part of the choir, it is to be taken up, and echoed back, by the creatures of this lower world, animate and inanimate, which have all their several parts assigned them, in the great work of glorifying their Creator.

3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be *above the heavens. 5. Let them praise the name of the* LORD: *for he commanded, and they were created. 6. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.*

The material heavens, through all their various regions, with the luminaries placed in them, and the waters sustained by them, though they have neither speech nor language, and want the tongue of men, yet, by their splendour and magnificence, their motions and their influences, all regulated and exerted according to the ordinance of their Maker, do, in a very intelligible and striking manner, declare the glory of God: they call upon us to translate their actions into our language, and copy their obedience in our lives; that so we may, both by word and deed, glorify, with them, the Creator and Redeemer of the universe.

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7. *Praise the* LORD *from the earth, ye dragons,* or, *whales, and all deeps :*

From heaven above, the Psalmist descendeth to the deep beneath, which, while it proclaims the power, observes the laws and decrees, of him who made it, and poured it abroad. And the same may be said of its enormous inhabitants, which are under the command of Jehovah, and of none but him.

8. *Fire, and hail; snow and vapours; stormy wind, fulfilling his word :*

These are so many messengers, always ready to go forth, at the command of the Most High, for the purposes of mercy or judgement. They praise and glorify God after their manner, while they "fulfil his "word" upon the earth.

9. *Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars :* 10. *Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl :*

Who shall ever understand and comprehend all the wisdom of God displayed in the vegetable world, from the cedar to the hyssop; in the animal, from the elephant to the pismire, from the eagle to the sparrow? The more we study them, the more we shall find him glorified in them; and the more, on that acconnt, will he be glorified by us.

11. *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth :* 12. *Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children :* 13. *Let them praise the name of the* LORD : *for his name alone is excellent; his glory* is *above the earth and heaven**.

* Nec ad solos Hebræos hæc pertinet adhortatio, sed ad omnes omnino homines: estque adeo veluti proludium vocationis

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After the whole creation hath been called upon to praise Jehovah; man, for whom the whole was made; man, the last and more perfect work of God; man, that hath been since redeemed by the blood of the Son of God incarnate, is exhorted to join and fill up the universal chorus of heaven and earth, as being connected with both worlds, that which now is, and that which is to come. Persons of every degree, of each sex, and of every age; "kings," whose power God hath made an image of his own, and who are the suns of their respective systems; "judges," and magistrates of all kinds, who derive their power, as the moon and planets do their light, from its original source; "young men and maidens," in the flower of health, strength, and beauty; "old men," who have accomplished their warfare, and are going out of life; "children," who are just come into it, and see every thing new before them; all these have their several reasons for "praising the Lord, whose "name is excellent, and his glory above heaven and "earth."

14. *He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints*, even *of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the* LORD.

As men, above all other creatures, so, above other men, the "Israel" of God, the "people" that are admitted to draw "near unto him," in his house, by faith and charity, by prayer and participation of the

Gentilium. Deum enim laudare, ut par est, non possunt, qui eum non bene nôrunt; nec eum satis nôrunt, qui Evangelium nunquam audiverunt; e quo maximæ Dei laudes efflorescunt CLERICUS in loc.

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sacraments, are bound to praise him, who now "ex-"alteth" them from sin to righteousness, and will hereafter exalt them from dust to glory.

Since few of my readers may, perhaps, have met with a paraphrase on the foregoing Psalm, that has hitherto, I believe, only made its appearance in a periodical publication or two, I shall take the liberty to subjoin it, as a piece, which cannot but be acceptable to all true lovers of sacred poetry. It was written, as I have been lately informed, by the learned and ingenious Dr. OGILVIE, at sixteen years of age.

PSALM CXLVIII.

I.

BEGIN, my soul, th' exalted lay,
Let each enraptur'd thought obey,
And praise the Almighty's name.
Lo! heaven and earth, and seas and skies,
In one melodious concert rise,
To swell th' inspiring theme.

II.

Ye fields of light, celestial plains,
Where gay transporting beauty reigns,
Ye scenes divinely fair;
Your Maker's wondrous power proclaim,
Tell how he form'd your shining frame,
And breath'd the fluid air.

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III.

Ye angels, catch the thrilling sound;
While all th' adoring thrones around
His boundless mercy sing;
Let every listening saint above
Wake all the tuneful soul of love,
And touch the sweetest string.

IV.

Join, ye loud spheres, the vocal choir;
Thou, dazzling orb of liquid fire,
The mighty chorus aid:
Soon as grey evening gilds the plain,
Thou, moon, protract the melting strain,
And praise him in the shade.

V.

Thou heaven of heavens, his vast abode;
Ye clouds, proclaim your forming God,
Who call'd yon worlds from night:
"Ye shades, dispel!"—th' Eternal said;
At once th' involving darkness fled,
And nature sprung to light.

VI.

Whate'er a blooming world contains,
That wings the air, that skims the plain,
United praise bestow:
Ye dragons, sound his awful name
To heaven aloud; and roar acclaim,
Ye swelling deeps below.

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VII.

Let every element rejoice:
Ye thunders, burst with awful voice
To him who bids you roll;
His praise in softer notes declare,
Each whisp'ring breeze of yielding air
And breathe it to the soul.

VIII.

To him, ye graceful cedars, bow;
Ye tow'ring mountains, bending low,
Your great Creator own:
Tell, when affrighted nature shook,
How *Sinai* kindled at his look,
And trembled at his frown.

IX.

Ye flocks that haunt the humble vale,
Ye insects flutt'ring on the gale,
In mutual concourse rise;
Crop the gay rose's vermeil bloom,
And waft its spoils, a sweet perfume,
In incense to the skies.

X.

Wake, all ye mountain tribes, and sing;
Ye plumy warblers of the spring,
Harmonious anthems raise
To him who shap'd your finer mould,
Who tipp'd your glitt'ring wings with gold,
And tun'd your voice to praise.

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XI.

Let man, by nobler passions sway'd,
The feeling heart, the judging head,
In heav'nly praise employ;
Spread his tremendous name around,
Till heav'n's broad arch rings back the sound,
The gen'ral burst of joy.

XII.

Ye whom the charms of grandeur please,
Nurs'd on the downy lap of ease,
Fall prostrate at his throne;
Ye princes, rulers, all adore;
Praise him, ye kings, who makes your pow'r
An image of his own.

XIII.

Ye fair, by nature form'd to move,
O praise th' eternal Source of love,
With youth's enliv'ning fire:
Let age take up the tuneful lay,
Sigh his bless'd name—then soar away,
And ask an angel's lyre.

PSALM CXLIX.

ARGUMENT.

The children of Zion are excited, 1—3, to rejoice, and sing the praises of their King, on account,

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4. of the salvation which he has already wrought for them, and which will hereafter be completed in them, when, 5. they shall enter into his rest, and, 6—9. triumph with him over the persecuting powers of the world, and all the opposers of Christ, on whom will then be executed the judgement written. The Jews, mistaking, as usual, the time, place, nature of Messiah's glorious kingdom, imagine this Psalm will receive its accomplishment, by their being made rulers of the nations, and lords of all things here below.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. *Sing unto the* LORD *a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. 2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3. Let them praise his name in the dance; let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*

Christians are now the people, to whom belong the names and characters of "saints, Israel, and "children of Zion." They "sing" this holy "song," as the Psalmist hath enjoined them to do. They sing it "new" in its evangelical sense, as new men, celebrating new victories, new and greater mercies, a spiritual salvation, an eternal redemption. They "rejoice," with hearts, voices, instruments, and every other token of joy, "in him who hath made" or created them again, in righteousness and true holiness; they are "joyful in their King," who hath himself overcome, and is now leading them on to

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final conquest and triumph, to honour and immortality.

4. For the LORD *taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5. The saints* shall be joyful with glory: they shall sing aloud upon their beds,* or, *places of rest.*

Such "pleasure" the King of Zion taketh in his people, that he hath not disdained to become like one of them; to partake of their flesh and blood, and to give them his Spirit; he was made man, to purchase them by his death; and as a man, he is gone into heaven, to prepare a place for them. From thence he will return, to "beautify the meek with salvation," and place on the heads of his true disciples, the lowly, patient, and peaceable ones, a bright and incorruptible crown. Therefore are "the saints joyful "in glory; they sing aloud," in a state of perfect ease and security, resting from their labours, but not from their hallelujahs.

6. *The high* praises *of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; 7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people: 8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9. To execute upon them the judgement written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the* LORD.

To those who are SAINTS indeed, and who are acquainted with the genuine spirit of the Gospel, how obvious is it, that the scene, of which we have here

* In this verse, the Hebrew verbs are in the future time. In the verse following, the original hath no verb at all. The liberty is therefore taken to render them accordingly.

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a prophetical exhibition, is one that cannot take place till after the resurrection, because the followers of the Lamb have certainly nothing to do with vengeance in this world, though they are to judge, not only men, but angels, in the next, 1 Cor. vi. 2. 3.; when they shall be called up to sit on thrones, as assessors, at the condemnation of their once-insulting persecutors, who will be cut asunder with the "two-edged sword," and bound with indissoluble "chains." Thus will be executed upon them the eternal "judgement written" and announced against the enemies of Messiah, in the Scriptures of truth. "This honour will all his saints THEN have."

PSALM CL.

ARGUMENT.

The Psalmist exhorteth men to praise Jehovah, 1. for his holiness, and the firmament of his power, 2. for the wonders of his might, and for his excellent greatness, 3—5. with all kinds of music. 6. He concludeth his divine book of praises, by calling upon every thing that hath breath, to employ that breath in declaring the glory of him who gave it.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. *Praise God in his sanctuary*, or, *for his holiness; praise him in*, or, *for the firmament*, or, *expansion, of his power.*

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If our translation be retained, the meaning is, that God should be praised in the "sanctuary," or temple below, and likewise in "heaven" above; the former being planned and constructed as a resemblance of the latter. But the context rather, perhaps, requires us to suppose the Psalmist giving the reasons why God should be praised; namely, on account of his "holiness," and of his "power;" which power is more especially displayed in the formation of the "firmament," or "expansion," of the material heavens, and their incessant operations, by means of the light and the air of which they are composed, upon the earth and all things therein. These are the appointed instruments of life and motion in the natural world, and they afford us some idea of that power of God unto salvation which is manifested in the church, by the effects produced on the souls of men, through the gracious influences of the LIGHT divine and the AIR of holiness, constituting the "firmament of God's power" in the new creation.

2. *Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.*

"Mighty" were the "acts" which God wrought for Israel, and "great" was the Holy One in the midst of his ancient people; but far mightier acts did he perform in Christ Jesus, for the redemption of the world; and more "excellent greatness" hath he manifested in the conversion of the nations, the overthrow of paganism, and the erection and preservation of the Christian church. O that her gratitude bore some proportion to his goodness!

3. *Praise him with the sound of the trumpet;*

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praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals.

It is impossible for us to distinguish and describe the several sorts of musical instruments here mentioned; as the Hebrews themselves acknowledge their ignorance in this particular. Thus much is clear, that the people of God are enjoined to use all the various kinds of them, in the performance of their divine services. And why should they not be so used under the Gospel? We read of sacred music before the law, in the instance of "Miriam, the pro-"phetess, the sister of Aaron," who, to celebrate the deliverance from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, "took "a timbrel in her hand, and the women went out "after her, with timbrels and dances." Exod. xv. 20. The custom, therefore, was not introduced by the law, nor abolished with it. Well regulated music, if ever it had the power of calming the passions, if ever it enlivened and exalted the affections of men in the worship of God (purposes for which it was formerly employed), doubtless hath still the same power, and can still afford the same aids to devotion. When the beloved disciple was, in spirit, admitted into the celestial choir, he not only heard them "singing" hymns of praise, but he heard likewise "the voice of harpers harping upon their harps." Rev. xiv. 2. And why that, which saints are represented as doing in heaven, should not be done, according to their skill and ability, by saints upon

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earth; or why instrumental music should be abolished as a legal ceremony, and vocal music, which was as much so, should be retained, no good reason can be assigned. Sacred music, under proper regulations, removes the hinderances of our devotion, cures the distractions of our thoughts, and banishes weariness from our minds. It adds solemnity to the public service, raises all the devout passions in the soul, and causes our duty to become our delight. "Of "the pleasures of heaven," says the eloquent and elegant bishop Atterbury, "nothing further is reveal-"ed to us, than that they consist in the practice of "holy music, and holy love; the joint enjoyment of "which, we are told, is to be the happy lot of all "pious souls, to endless ages." It may be added, that there is no better method of combating the mischievous effects flowing from the abuse of music, than by applying it to its true and proper use. If the worshippers of Baal join in a chorus to celebrate the praises of their idol, the servants of Jehovah should drown it, by one that is stronger and more powerful, in praise of him who made heaven and earth. If the men of the world rejoice in the object of their adoration, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

6. *Let every thing that hath breath praise the* LORD. *Praise ye the* LORD.

The breath of natural life, which God hath breathed into our nostrils, and the breath of that new and eternal life, which he hath given us through Christ Jesus our Lord, should be returned in hallelujahs. And then the church, composed of many and different members, all actuated like the pipes of a well-

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tuned organ, by the same spirit, and conspiring together in perfect harmony, would become one great instrument sounding forth the praises of God most high.

LET EVERY THING THAT HATH BREATH PRAISE THE LORD!—With this wish the sweet Psalmist of Israel closes the songs of Zion. With the same wish the author desires to close these meditations upon them; giving thanks to the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts, by whose most gracious favour and aid they have been begun, continued, and ended; and humbly praying, that no errors, or improprieties, from which, through human infirmity, during the course of a long work, the most diligent and careful are not exempt, may prevent his labours from contributing, in some small degree, to promote the improvement and consolation of the redeemed, the honour and glory of the Redeemer, who is THE ROOT AND THE OFFSPRING OF DAVID, AND THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR*. AMEN.

* Rev. xxii. 16.

THE END.

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